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THE PLACE OF  
FORM-FOCUSED  
INSTRUCTION  
IN THE FOREIGN  
LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

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*To my parents*



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## Introduction

The extent to which learners should be required to attend to the formal aspects of the language they are trying to master has been a highly controversial issue in second and foreign language pedagogy since the inception of second language acquisition research, and it can still be described as such at the beginning of the twenty-first century.<sup>1</sup> In the 1960s and early 1970s form-focused instruction, or grammar teaching, to use a somewhat more familiar term, was still viewed by most theorists, researchers and methodologists as an indispensable component of successful language programs, with the existing controversies centering around the degree of its explicitness and large-scale studies being conducted to resolve them (cf. Diller 1978). It was only some time later that, inspired by the findings of investigations into child native language learning, SLA researchers embarked on a similar line of enquiry. They discovered that, just like L1 acquisition, second language learning was a gradual and lengthy process of creating form-meaning-use mappings, it was constrained by the presence of relatively fixed orders and sequences of acquisition, and the passage through such developmental stages was impervious to pedagogic intervention.

This resulted in the emergence of theoretical positions and specific pedagogic proposals which advocated the abandonment of grammar instruction and error correction as well as the recreation in the classroom of the conditions of the natural language learning experience. In the course of time, however, these natural and purely communicative approaches came under severe criticism themselves when it turned out that often rudimentary communicative abilities were developed at the expense of accuracy and appropriateness, and, as Canadian immersion programs aptly demonstrated, even after many years of meaning-focused instruction, high levels of grammatical and discourse competence failed to be attained. As a consequence, grammar was rehabilitated and there is at present a broad

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<sup>1</sup> Unless clearly indicated otherwise, the terms *second* and *foreign language learning* are used interchangeably in this book. This also applies to the terms *acquisition* and *learning*.

consensus among SLA theorists and researchers that form-focused instruction has a facilitative effect on classroom language learning and may even be an absolute necessity in some educational settings. However, this is about everything that applied linguists seem to agree upon and there remain numerous controversies in the field which are far from being resolved despite the multitude of research projects motivated by various theoretical positions. In particular, there is little agreement about the most beneficial types of form-focused instruction, its timing, duration, intensity and its place in the overall language curriculum as well as the choice of linguistic features to be targeted by pedagogic intervention (cf. Ellis 2006).

The main aim of this book is to contribute to the ongoing debate concerning the value of form-focused instruction in foreign language pedagogy by addressing the controversial issues mentioned above with reference to the realities of the Polish educational context. While the noble goal of extending our knowledge of how target language forms should best be taught and, thus, shedding some new light on the questions that SLA researchers have been grappling with for over two decades constitutes ample justification for undertaking this task, there also exist several very practical and down-to-earth reasons why a publication of this kind is necessary. In the first place, there is considerable uncertainty about the status of grammar teaching in Polish schools, with materials writers and practitioners still according it a very important place, and the educational authorities modifying examination requirements in such a way that accuracy virtually ceases to be important. Another problem is the sometimes lamentable quality of form-focused instruction in different types of schools, which appears to be the corollary of the fact that many teachers adhere to somewhat outdated views of language and language learning, and they elect to slavishly follow the coursebook rather than determine the syllabus and the ways of its implementation on the basis of their students' characteristics and needs.

Quite predictably, this results in grammatical structures being introduced and practiced in rather traditional ways, learners receiving meager opportunities to use them in spontaneous communication, and language tests perpetuating the assumption that knowing a language feature is tantamount to being able to use it in completion, translation or transformation exercises. Given the fact that foreign language instruction in school is limited to just a few

lessons a week and the opportunities for anything else than incidental out-of-class exposure are often scant, it is hardly surprising that there are still many learners who cannot deploy the consciously known rules in the service of genuine meaning and message conveyance. On the other hand, the diminished importance of grammatical competence during senior high school final examinations leads some students to believe that there is little point in bothering about the accuracy, appropriacy and coherence of their output, with the effect that they settle for a pidginized version of the target language which may be communicatively effective but is patently inadequate for academic or professional advancement.

One would reasonably expect that such problems will be addressed by applied linguists who are familiar with the local educational system and are thus better able to offer pedagogic recommendations that are not only in keeping with the latest theoretical positions and research findings, but also, much more importantly perhaps, are applicable to a particular instructional setting. Unfortunately, there is a striking paucity of empirical investigations into form-focused instruction in Poland and, even more alarmingly, there are virtually no attempts to provide teachers with a set of practicable guidelines in this respect. Moreover, even if such guidelines were to be produced, a question arises as to the extent to which they could be based on the findings of research conducted in educational contexts different from our own. After all, the fact that a particular technique, instructional sequence or curricular solution proves to be effective for a group of immersion students or second language learners who have unlimited access to the target language in the ambient environment does not mean that such proposals can uncritically be applied to teaching foreign languages in Poland.

Thus, there is an urgent need to appraise the utility of the diverse instructional options derived from SLA theory and research, taking into account the specificity of the Polish educational setting so as to avoid situations where teachers are encouraged to employ innovations that are incongruent with its characteristics. Even more importantly, consistent efforts should be undertaken to empirically determine the effectiveness of specific techniques and their combinations in real classrooms as only in this way will it be possible to identify those that hold out the most promise and to investigate the circumstances under which they can be most beneficial. It is the dual task of theoretically appraising the choices

in form-focused instruction identified by SLA researchers of diverse hue and empirically verifying the impact of two clusters of instructional options on helping Polish secondary school learners gain greater control over problematic aspects of English grammar that this book is intended to attain. In doing so, it aims to provide Polish teachers of English and other foreign languages with a set of locally-based provisional specifications that they can more or less formally experiment with in their own classrooms. In this way, it can be seen as making an important contribution to narrowing the gap between SLA theory and research, on the one hand, and foreign language pedagogy, on the other.

The present volume consists of five chapters, the first four of which provide the relevant theoretical background and the last presents and discusses the findings of two studies carried out in the context of the Polish former secondary school. Chapter One, intended as an introduction to the complex field of research into form-focused instruction, attempts to resolve crucial terminological issues and delineate the scope of the deliberations undertaken in the subsequent parts of the book. In particular, the terms *form-focused instruction* and *language form* are defined, the dimensions of grammar, grammatical knowledge and use are explored, a historical sketch of the role of formal instruction in foreign language pedagogy is presented, the rationale for carrying out form-focused instruction research is spelled out, and, finally, the evolving aims and methodology of empirical investigations of this kind are discussed. The main concern of Chapter Two are non-interventionist approaches to language teaching and learning, with a particular emphasis being placed on the rationale for the outright rejection of direct pedagogic intervention as a viable teaching strategy. Thus, it briefly touches upon Chomsky's views on the nature of first language learning and the research endeavors they triggered, discusses the findings of early studies into the processes of second language acquisition, presents and evaluates the theoretical positions that provide a justification for the *zero grammar option*, and outlines the tenets of the major classroom implementations of such models and hypotheses. Chapter Three explores an array of pedagogical, empirical and theoretical arguments in favor of the utility of form-focused instruction and attempts to mount a convincing case for the need to accord it an important place in the foreign language curriculum. With an eye to attaining these goals, the shortcomings

of exclusively meaning-centered teaching are thoroughly discussed, numerous research findings testifying to the effectiveness of grammar teaching are presented, and the role of formal instruction in several current theoretical models is explored. The chapter closes with the presentation and evaluation of a comprehensive theory of instructed language learning proposed by Rod Ellis (1997), which informs the approach to the place of form-focused instruction in foreign language pedagogy adopted in the present work. The aim of Chapter Four is to offer a comprehensive, in-depth and up-to-date overview of the options teachers can draw upon in directing their learners' attention to the formal aspects of the target language. It focuses on a range of instructional microoptions (i.e. techniques and procedures used in teaching specific TL features), macrooptions (i.e. issues relating to the planning and implementation of language lessons, syllabus design and selection of forms to be taught) and assessment procedures, explores their value in the light of the relevant research findings and appraises their utility in the Polish educational setting. Finally, Chapter Five reports the results of two action-research projects conducted in the Polish secondary school context which aimed to investigate the impact of two clusters of instructional options on the acquisition of such aspects of English grammar as the passive, the past simple and present perfect tenses.

The book closes with a set of tentative guidelines for the teaching of language forms in the Polish educational setting and directions for future empirical investigations which would help verify the applicability and usefulness of the solutions proposed and provide teachers with more concrete provisional specifications. The main strength of the recommendations offered lies in the fact that they are firmly grounded in the Polish educational context, taking full account of its realities and limitations. What is more, they are not confined to listing the most beneficial techniques and procedures, and also seek to specify how these instructional options should be combined to accomplish successful grammar lessons, how the grammar component can best be incorporated into the language curriculum and how learners' mastery of language features can most profitably be tested. Due to the author's teaching experience and the setting in which the two research projects were conducted, all the pedagogic proposals are primarily meant to apply to the teaching of formal aspects of language to secondary, or, to use the term reflecting the changes introduced by the educational reform, senior high

school students. Such a qualification notwithstanding, there is no reason why at least some of the suggestions should not be applicable to grammar teaching as it is conducted in junior high schools or institutions of higher education, provided that the specificity of each local context is fully acknowledged. Preliminary and tentative as these research-based pedagogical implications necessarily have to be, they provide foreign language teachers in Poland with a set of concrete and practicable solutions the effectiveness of which they will be able to verify in their own instructional settings. It is the hope of the author that such an approach may not only result in better quality grammar teaching, but also contribute to making practitioners more reflective, thus enhancing the overall quality of foreign language instruction in our country.

## Chapter One

# Form-focused instruction – staking out the territory

## Introduction

Perhaps with the exception of the staunchest supporters of the non-interface position and Stephen Krashen (1982, 1985, 2003) himself, there is a general consensus among second language acquisition (SLA) theorists and researchers that form-focused instruction is necessary, or at least facilitative, in order to ensure that learners are not only communicatively effective but also accomplish their intended communicative goals by means of language that is accurate and appropriate (e.g. Doughty and Williams 1998c; Ellis 2001b). Interestingly, the dissatisfaction with natural and purely communicative approaches to language pedagogy is shared by scholars subscribing to quite disparate models of language and language learning, although the views on the exact nature of the contribution of formal instruction are likely to vary. For example, scholars working within the Universal Grammar framework see the benefit of pedagogic intervention in helping learners reset the value of particular parameters (e.g. White 1991; Cook 1994; Gregg 2001).<sup>1</sup> In contrast, those adhering to information processing models claim that instruction is justified in that the declarative knowledge it results in can ultimately be converted into procedural knowledge by means of automatization (e.g. Johnson 1996; DeKeyser 1998). There are also the adherents of connectionist approaches for whom explicit grammar teaching may be indispensable since it fosters the initial registration of language representation as well as the making of complex associations (e.g. N. Ellis 2002).

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<sup>1</sup> Not surprisingly, though, there is no consensus in this area and there are other UG researchers (e.g. Schwartz 1993; Schwartz and Sprouse 1996) who adhere to the so-called *full transfer, full access hypothesis* according to which there is no role for negative evidence in second language acquisition. Such positions will be discussed at greater length in section 2.3.3. of the following chapter.

On a more pedagogical note, even those who favor the use of task-based syllabuses rather than structural ones, have largely rejected the non-interventionist position adopted by Prabhu (1987), a precursor of task-based teaching in the form of a procedural syllabus. In fact, the proponents of the weak variant of task-based learning are of the opinion that learners' attention has to be drawn to the formal aspects of their output as otherwise they will become fluent thanks to the use of communication strategies or prefabricated chunks but this will happen at the expense of accuracy. As Skehan (2002: 97) aptly puts it, "From theory, the main insight is that a focus on form is necessary within a task-based approach to instruction. If such a focus is not present, there is a danger that learners will become effective at transacting tasks, but not pressure their language systems to change and not have sufficient concern to eliminate error. Form and meaning will not, in other words, come together effectively". Obviously, theorists, researchers and methodologists are much less unanimous with regard to the extent to which form-focused instruction may contribute to language development as well as the ways in which it should most profitably be provided, the main area of contention being the level of explicitness of particular techniques and procedures. There is also a lot of controversy concerning the structures which are most amenable to instruction, the timing of pedagogic intervention as well as the overall role of grammar teaching within a particular lesson and the entire language curriculum.

Before exploring the issues outlined above, it appears warranted, however, to offer some preliminary comments on the concept of form-focused instruction against which the theoretical models, research findings and instructional options discussed in the subsequent chapters can more easily be understood and this is exactly what the present chapter is intended to accomplish. Since there is a lot of terminological confusion concerning the terms *form-focused instruction* and *form* itself, first an attempt will be made to explore the ways in which these concepts are used in the current SLA literature and to spell out what they refer to in the present work. The term *form-focused instruction* frequently being equated with the teaching of grammatical structures in a number of theoretical frameworks and research projects, the explication of relevant terminological issues will be followed by the discussion of the notion of *grammar*, its different interpretations and misconceptions



surrounding it. Subsequently, an overview of the changing views on the value of form-focused instruction in foreign language pedagogy will be presented, with particular emphasis being placed on the reasons for the departure from what Doughty (1998) describes as *traditional language teaching* in favor of more communicative approaches, as well as the current appreciation of formal instruction in classroom language acquisition. In the last two sections, the rationale for investigating the effectiveness of grammar teaching and its role in the foreign language classroom will be addressed in terms of bridging the gap between SLA research and language pedagogy, so frequently viewed as irreconcilable, and the methodology of research into form-focused instruction will be outlined.

### 1.1. Defining *form-focused instruction*

Since the effect of teacher instructional activities on language development has been of interest to second language acquisition researchers and methodologists for over forty years, it is hardly surprising that there is so much terminological confusion in the relevant professional literature. When going through the mind-boggling number of articles in professional journals and edited collections, or pertinent chapters in works reviewing the accomplishments of SLA research, one is likely to encounter a multitude of terms referring to direct instruction in the aspects of the target language (TL). Such labels as *analytic teaching* (Stern 1992), *instructed second language acquisition* (Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991), *instructed second language learning* (Gass and Selinker 2001; Ellis 2005a), *formal instruction* (Ellis 1990, 1994), *code-focused instruction* (Doughty and Williams 1998b), *form-focused instruction* (Ellis 1997; Spada 1997; Ellis 2001b), or simply *grammar teaching* (Ellis 2002a; Hinkel and Fotos 2002b; Larsen-Freeman 2003; Ellis 2006) abound in the literature and, although they are typically juxtaposed with *meaning-focused instruction*, they are not always used in the same sense. To make matters even more complicated, anyone investigating the effect of formal instruction is bound, sooner or later, to come across Michael Long's (1991) seminal work and his distinction between a *focus on forms* and a *focus on form*, which, while extremely influential and providing a basis for a number of research projects, has been interpreted in quite disparate ways and generated even more

terminological confusion. In addition, researchers and methodologists differ widely when it comes to defining the term *form* itself, with some of them regarding it as being synonymous with morpho-syntax (e.g. Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991), others tending to extend its meaning to other language subsystems (e.g. Doughty and Williams 1998b, 1998c), and others yet adopting different interpretations in different publications (e.g. Ellis 1997, 2001b, 2002a). In view of such terminological difficulties, it appears fully warranted to discuss the distinctions between the diverse labels mentioned above and make it clear how they are understood in this work.

It probably makes sense to begin our discussion with expounding the distinction between *form-focused instruction* and *meaning-focused instruction*, as it has frequently been used to differentiate traditional language teaching as exemplified by the Grammar Translation Method or Audiolingualism from natural, communicative and content-based approaches such as those found, for instance, in immersion programs (cf. Long and Robinson 1998). In the words of Ellis (2001b: 13), "the former describes instruction where there is some attempt to draw learners' attention to linguistic form (...) [whereas] the latter refers to instruction that requires learners to attend only to the content of what they want to communicate (...)". In other words, *form-focused instruction* is a capacious term which covers any kind of teaching which requires learners to attend to formal aspects of language, including the use of explicit and implicit instructional techniques, the presentation of rules and provision of corrective feedback (cf. Spada 1997). As such, the term is largely synonymous with *formal instruction* or *grammar teaching*, and it encompasses both a *focus on forms* and a *focus on form*, a distinction to be discussed later in this section. *Meaning-focused instruction*, on the other hand, engages the learner in using the TL to convey messages in tasks requiring information-exchange, problem-solving or opinion-sharing rather than focusing on any specific aspect of the code. The distinction between *form-focused instruction* and *meaning-focused instruction* roughly matches the one that Stern (1992: 301) has made between the *analytic* and *experiential teaching strategy*. While the former relies on the techniques of study and practice and invites the learner to pay attention to formal and functional features of languages which are to a greater or lesser extent abstracted from the context of actual use, the latter encourages the student to use the

language to accomplish specific communicative goals, focus on communication and participate in social interactions and practical transactions. It has to be noted, however, that although the *experiential strategy* can be rather unproblematically equated with *meaning-focused instruction*, the *analytic strategy* is not as comprehensive in scope as *form-focused instruction*, as it does not appear to encompass drawing learners' attention to linguistic forms in the context of communicative activities, or Long's (1991) *focus on form*, a fact that some authors appear to overlook (e.g. Ellis 2001b).

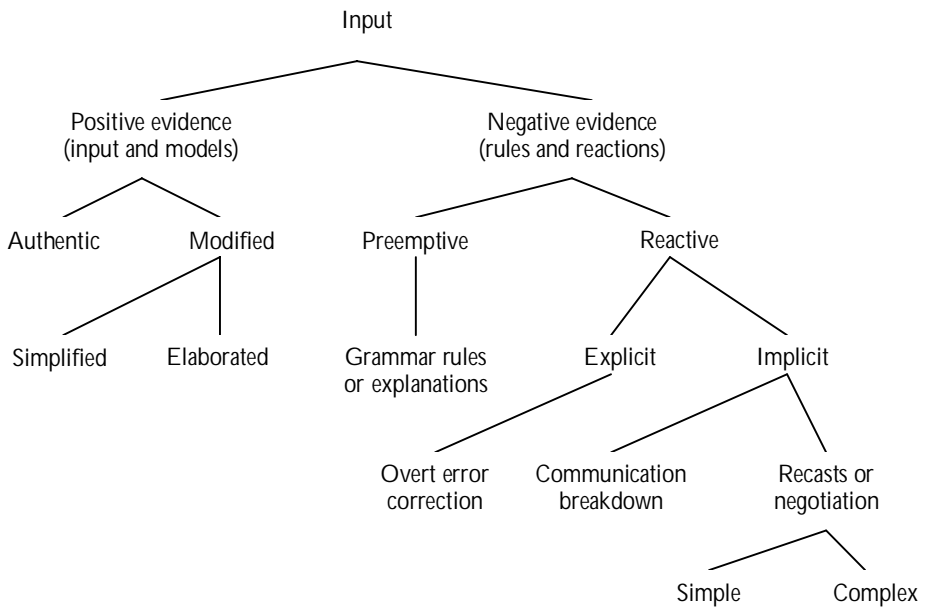


Figure 1.1. *Types of evidence for second language acquisition (Doughty 1998: 143).*

The difference between meaning-focused instruction and form-focused instruction can also be conceptualized in terms of the data available to learners in the process of second language (L2) acquisition, with the possible options diagrammatically represented in Figure 1.1. above. Thus, whereas the former typically attaches the most importance to the provision of *positive evidence*, or samples of language, both spoken and written as one can reasonably assume, that provide learners with information about what *is* possible in the

L2, the latter attributes a key role to *negative evidence*, defined as information about what *is not* possible in this language (cf. Doughty 1998).<sup>2</sup> Positive evidence, described by Gregg (2001: 170) as "language used, that is utterances in context", can take different forms in the classroom, and be either *unmodified*, in which case learners are provided with authentic language texts, or *modified*, where *simplification* or *elaboration* are undertaken before learning problems become evident. As for negative evidence, or "language mentioned" (Gregg 2001: 170), a distinction has been made between *preemptive negative evidence*, which provides students with rules and explanations before they have a chance to produce incorrect forms, and *reactive negative evidence*, which entails the provision of corrective feedback. This feedback can further be *explicit*, where learners are overtly informed in some way that an error has been committed, or *implicit*, where interlocutors can either break off communication or resort to *recasts* or *negotiation* (a more detailed discussion of these options can be found in Chapter Four, section 4.1.2.). At the risk of simplification, we can say that while the supporters of meaning-focused instruction believe that positive evidence is sufficient, the proponents of different variants of form-focused instruction are of the opinion it does not make the grade in the sense that it does not ensure complete mastery of the target language. They argue that input evidence contains so much information of different kinds (e.g. phonological, semantic, morphological, syntactic, pragmatic, etc.) that if learners are to benefit from it, their attention needs to be directed to specific language features, making the provision of negative evidence indispensable (cf. Doughty 1998; Long and Robinson 1998).

Widely accepted as it is in the SLA literature, the distinction between the two types of instruction has not been without its critics. Widdowson (1998), for example, argues that it is spurious as in form-focused instruction learners have to in fact attend to both the forms and the semantic meanings they realize whereas in meaning-focused instruction language forms still have to be processed so that the encoding and decoding of meaning can take place. Dissatisfaction with the existing dichotomy is also expressed by Ellis (1997:

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<sup>2</sup> The distinction was first applied to native language acquisition. In this case, *positive evidence* refers to the utterances caretakers direct at children, or *primary linguistic data* (PLD), and *negative evidence* describes forms and structures that are ungrammatical (cf. Gregg 2001).

41), who points out that "SLA researchers are aware that grammatical forms encode meanings – that '-s' conveys plurality (among other meanings); that '-ed' on a verb denotes past time; that the article 'the' is a device for realizing definiteness and so on". He subsequently adds that "Both types of instruction require learners to attend to form and meaning but they differ with regard to the goal of the instruction. The goal of meaning-focused instruction is communicative effectiveness while that of form-focused instruction is linguistic accuracy". Elsewhere, Ellis (2000) has also suggested that the crucial difference between the two types of instruction lies in whether we conceive of language as an object of study or a tool for communicating with other people as well as whether we expect our learners to perform the role of students or, rather, enable them to act as language users. It should also be noted that, although there are classrooms, especially in foreign language contexts, where most of the time is devoted to studying or practicing certain forms and structures, and it is also possible to find such where students primarily engage in meaningful communication, as is the case with Canadian immersion programs, many interactions in the language classroom fall somewhere in between these two extremes and are examples of a *dual focus on form and meaning* (cf. Ellis 2001b).

A distinction to which the research community currently attaches particular importance and which has been extremely influential in motivating a number of research projects is that between a *focus on forms* and a *focus on form*, which was introduced by Long (1991) and subsequently subjected to a number of different interpretations.<sup>3</sup> As can be seen from Figure 1.2., adapted from Long and Robinson (1998: 16) and presenting possible options in language teaching, the labels are used to differentiate between two types of form-focused instruction and, as such, they contrast with meaning-focused instruction. The term *focus on forms* is intended to refer to the traditional approach to grammar teaching, based on what Wilkins (1976) has called a *synthetic syllabus*, where the language

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<sup>3</sup> Although the distinction is extremely influential and has provided an impetus for much theorizing and research in the field of SLA, it should be noted that not all researchers are entirely happy with it. Sheen (2005), for example, argues that Long's (1991) characterization of a *focus on forms* is a misinterpretation if one takes into account the way it is described in recent publications (e.g. Celce-Murcia et al. 1997; Sheen 2003), where the communicative element is also regarded as top priority.

is broken down into its component parts (e.g. functions, words, grammatical structures, etc.), with the items to be taught being preselected and ordered according to such criteria as simplicity, frequency or utility (Johnson 2001). These items are subsequently presented deductively or inductively and subjected to intensive and systematic treatment in the hope that the learner will eventually be able to synthesize the pieces for use in communication (cf. Long and Robinson 1998; Ellis 2001b). Thus, the primary attention is on the form that is being targeted in a particular lesson rather than meaningful language use. Although the assumption that language learning is a process of accumulating distinct entities underlay both lexical, notional-functional and structural syllabuses, it is the *structural syllabus*, used for sequencing the material in the traditional teaching methods (e.g. Grammar Translation, Audiolingual Method, Total Physical Response, etc.) that is most often associated with the *focus on forms approach*. According to Ellis, Basturkmen and Loewen (2002), a good example of *focus on forms* in action could be a lesson conducted using the PPP (present-practice-produce) procedure, where the presentation of a grammatical structure is followed by controlled exercises and, finally, the provision of opportunities to use it in more communicative tasks (see Chapter Four, section 4.2.1.).

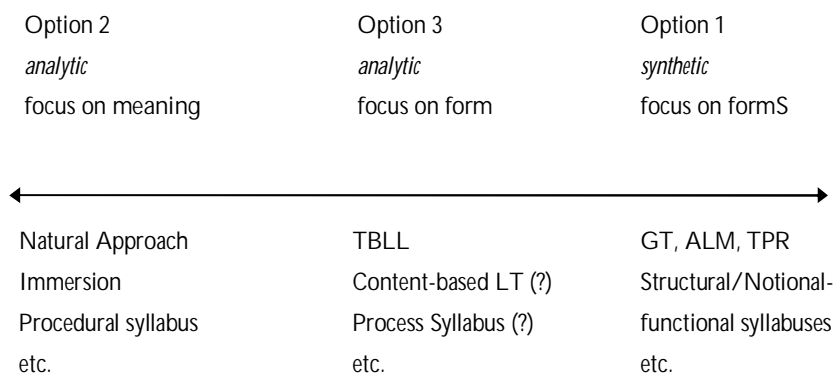


Figure 1.2. *Options in language teaching (adapted from Long and Robinson 1998: 16).*

In contrast, to use the words of Long (1991: 45-46), *focus on form* "overtly draws students' attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or

communication". Since this initial definition offered little guidance as to how an approach of this kind could be practically implemented in the classroom, Long and Robinson (1998: 23) subsequently offered a more operational one, stating that "focus on form often consists of an occasional shift of attention to linguistic code features – by the teacher and/or one or more students – triggered by perceived problems with comprehension and production". In other words, the *focus on form approach*, which is motivated by the claims of the *Interaction Hypothesis* (Long 1983a, 1996; see Chapter Three, section 3.3.6. for discussion of interactionist approaches), is similar to meaning-focused instruction in the sense that it is based on an analytic syllabus, organized in terms of the purposes for which a language is learnt and the uses of language necessary to meet them rather than a list of linguistic items (Wilkins 1976). However, it differs from a pure focus on meaning in allowing attention to linguistic form as long as it happens in the context of genuine message conveyance. For example, learners could be asked to describe the most memorable experiences in their lives and, as they are engaged in doing so, have their attention drawn to some linguistic features which are necessary to perform the task or those which turn out to be problematic as reflected, for instance, in the errors they commit. Although this type of instruction differs considerably from the traditional teaching of grammar of the kind discussed above, this does not mean, as Doughty and Williams (1998b) emphasize, that *focus on form* and *focus on forms* should be viewed as polar opposites in the same way as *meaning-focused instruction* and *form-focused instruction* typically have been. Rather, as they put it, "focus on form *entails* a focus on formal elements of language, whereas focus on formS is *limited* to such a focus, and focus on meaning *excludes* it" (1998b: 4).

As the concept of *focus on form* has grown in importance in the SLA literature, its original definition has been extended to cover the kinds of pedagogic intervention that it initially excluded, a shift that Ellis (2001b) explains in terms of the desire on the part of the researchers to conduct experimental studies. When first proposing the concept, Long (1991) emphasized its two important characteristics:

- 1) attention to form should occur in lessons which are predominantly meaning-centered and permit genuine communication;

- 2) attention to form should be incidental, that is, it should arise as a result of communicative need either in anticipation of or in response to a learner error.

However, while researchers, including Long himself, did ensure that the first characteristic was present in a number of subsequent studies by providing instructional treatment in the context of meaning-focused activities, they frequently ignored the latter, frequently preselecting the targeted form and, thus, opting for planned rather than incidental intervention (e.g. Doughty and Varela 1998; Long, Inagaki and Ortega 1998; Williams and Evans 1998; Izumi 2002; Pawlak 2004a, 2004b).

The adoption of such an extended interpretation is clearly visible in Doughty and Williams's (1998c) thorough discussion of the pedagogical choices in *focus on form*, where they stress the importance of analyzing learners' linguistic needs to identify features that require treatment, and conclude that both *planned* and *incidental* intervention, or what they refer to as *proactive* and *reactive* approaches, "are effective depending on classroom circumstances" (1998c: 211).<sup>4</sup> Moreover, they also make it plain that focus on form can be both *integrated* with meaning at all times and *sequential*, where brief, explicit instruction of formal knowledge precedes the utilization of communicative tasks, and see a place for both *implicit* and *explicit* focus on form techniques. Although this reconceptualization might not appear to be very significant in view of the fact that its distinguishing feature, namely the requirement that a learner's engagement with meaning precedes attention to the code, is preserved, there is in fact an essential difference between planned and incidental options. This is because whereas the former involves *intensive* treatment of a preselected form with learners being able to attend to it many times, the latter entails a much more extensive focus as a range of linguistic features will inevitably be targeted (cf. Ellis 2001b; Ellis, Basturkmen and Loewen 2001a, 2001b, 2002).

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<sup>4</sup> In fact, there is a considerable terminological mix-up here as Doughty and Williams (1998c) appear to equate *incidental* with *reactive focus on form* or the provision of corrective feedback. In more recent publications, however, (e.g. Ellis 2001b; Ellis, Basturkmen and Loewen 2002), the term *incidental focus on form* is preferred when referring to unplanned interventions, and it is divided into *preemptive* and *reactive focus on form*. These distinctions will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.



This pivotal point will be further elaborated upon in section 4.2.1. of Chapter Four.

Irrespective of whether the requirement that the instructional treatment be incidental is retained or it is extended to cover planned pedagogic interventions, the underlying assumption of focus on form is that "meaning and use must already be evident to the learner at the time that attention is drawn to the linguistic apparatus needed to get the meaning across" (Doughty and Williams 1998b: 4). Consequently, although a *focus on form* and a *focus on forms* can both be distinguished from a *focus on meaning* in their sharing the belief that formal aspects of the TL code should be attended to, there is a fundamental difference between them in terms of their theoretical underpinnings. Sheen (2002: 303) explains it in the following way:

'Focus on form' derives from an assumed degree of similarity between first and second language acquisition positing that the two processes are both based on exposure to comprehensible input arising from natural interaction. However, it is also assumed that there are significant differences in the two processes: that exposure is insufficient to enable learners to acquire much of the second-language grammar, and that this lack needs to be compensated for by focusing learners' attention on grammatical features. 'Focus on forms', on the other hand, is based on the assumption that classroom foreign or second language learning derives from general cognitive processes, and thus entails the learning of a skill – hence its being characterized as a 'skills-learning approach'.

Clear-cut as the distinction appears to be at the level of theoretical assumptions, it is perhaps a much more complex task to draw a definitive line between the two options in actual classroom practice. This is perhaps one of the reasons why the use of the two terms in the literature has not always been consistent with the definitions provided above, with the result that it is not at all times apparent what kind of instruction is being referred to. Some researchers (e.g. Spada 1997; DeKeyser 1998; Lightbown 1998), for instance, choose to use the term *focus on form* to cover any kind of teaching which involves formal instruction regardless of its characteristics, thus in fact conflating the terms in question. In an attempt to resolve such terminological difficulties, Doughty and Williams (1998b) have suggested that, due to its ambiguity, the term *form-focused instruction* should be abandoned altogether in discussions

of formal instruction and that it should be replaced with such contrasting terms as *formS-focused instruction* and *FonF instruction*, a proposal that has not actually been heeded in the relevant literature.

To make matters even more complicated, researchers sometimes find it difficult to agree on a common interpretation of the instructional treatment used in particular studies. A notable example here is the seminal paper in which Norris and Ortega (2000, 2001) synthesize and conduct a meta-analysis of the findings from experimental and quasi-experimental studies investigating the effectiveness of formal instruction. When assigning the research projects to different categories, they elected to classify a study as being representative of focus on form if *any* of the following characteristics was present: (1) designing tasks that foster learner engagement with meaning prior to form, (2) seeking to attain and document task-essentialness or naturalness of the L2 forms, (3) attempting to ensure that instruction was unobtrusive, and (4) documenting learner mental processing (i.e. noticing) (Norris and Ortega 2001: 167). Since the presence of even one of such features was sufficient to treat a given research project as an example of focus on form, studies using input processing treatment (e.g. VanPatten and Sanz 1995; VanPatten and Oikarinen 1996) were classified in this way although other researchers tend to view them as instances of a focus on forms (cf. Ellis 2001b; Sheen 2002, 2003, 2005).

As has already been mentioned at the beginning of this section, the terminological confusion is by no means confined to the pedagogic intervention that aims to get learners to attend to formal elements of language and also applies to determining what these 'formal elements' actually are. In many recent publications dealing with the effectiveness of different types of instruction the authors typically point out that the term *form* is used to refer to grammatical, graphological, lexical, phonological and pragmalinguistic aspects of language (cf. Doughty and Williams 1998c; Ellis 2001b; Ellis, Basturkmen and Loewen 2001b, 2002). However, in many other cases, the term is used to refer exclusively to different aspects of syntax and morphology (e.g. Doughty 1998; Mitchell 2000; Hinkel and Fotos 2002b; Larsen-Freeman 2003), and, in fact, it is not uncommon for some authors to extend their discussion of issues in form-focused instruction to different language subsystems in one

publication only to equate 'form' with grammar in another (e.g. Ellis 1997, 2001b, 2002a).

Also, even a cursory inspection of the studies which aim to investigate the effectiveness of formal instruction in general or those exploring the value of specific instructional options reveals that most of them are directed at different aspects of morphosyntax, with research projects targeting lexis, phonology or pragmatics being few and far between (e.g. Doughty and Williams 1998; Ellis 2001a, 2002b). Such areas are typically addressed alongside grammar in descriptive research investigating the incidence and effect of incidental focus on form (e.g. Lyster and Ranta 1997; Ellis, Basturkmen and Loewen 2001a, 2001b; Lyster 2001; Loewen 2003), and they are also targeted when, for instance, graphology or phonology are viewed as instrumental in helping learners master a particular aspect of TL grammar such as a rule of morphology (e.g. Arteaga, Herschensohn and Gess 2003). When it comes to experimental or quasi-experimental studies seeking to determine the effect of instructional treatments on the acquisition of specific linguistic features, there is just a handful targeting lexis (e.g. Ellis et al. 1999; He and Ellis 1999), phonology (e.g. Pawlak and Pospieszńska 2003) or pragmatics (Lyster 1994; Koike and Pearson 2005), with attempts to offer pedagogic or research guidelines in these areas, such as those proposed by the present author for the correction of pronunciation errors (Pawlak 2004c), being even less common. The reason why most researchers are primarily interested in grammatical forms and pay little attention to other language subsystems can be explained in terms of the fact that while focus on form may be unnecessary for lexis and insufficient for pronunciation, the effectiveness of form-focused instruction in the area of morphosyntax is much more complex and variable, which justifies undertaking so many research endeavors in this field (cf. DeKeyser 1998).

With such a proliferation of terms that theorists and researchers use to refer to direct classroom instruction and such a diversity in the way the different labels are interpreted and operationalized in research projects, it is necessary at this point to make it clear what the term *form-focused instruction* (FFI), which can be found in the title of the whole work as well as many of the chapters and subchapters it contains, is intended to mean. Following Ellis (2001b: 1), the term "is used to refer to any planned or incidental instructional activity

that is intended to induce language learners to pay attention to linguistic form" and, to use the words of Spada (1997: 73), it includes "any pedagogical effort which is used to draw the learners' attention to language form either implicitly or explicitly. This can include the direct teaching of language (e.g. through grammar rules) and/or reactions to learners' errors (e.g. corrective feedback)". Thus, *form-focused instruction* is used in this work to cover both traditional approaches to teaching linguistic forms based on structural or notional syllabi (i.e. Long's *focus on forms*) and more communicative approaches, where the syllabus is usually task-based and attention to form arises in activities which are predominantly meaning-centered (i.e. Long's *focus on form*). The other terms mentioned at the beginning of this section, such as *instructed language acquisition*, *formal instruction* or *code-focused instruction* will be used interchangeably with *form-focused instruction* and should be interpreted as having exactly the same application.

As far as the term *form* is concerned, it will primarily be used to refer to aspects of syntax and morphology, although some comments on the potential application of particular instructional options in teaching other language subsystems as well as their effectiveness will also occasionally be made. Such a limited interpretation is related to the fact that most of the existing theoretical models and available research findings seeking to explicate the role of formal instruction in L2 acquisition tend to focus almost exclusively on grammar. Moreover, a comprehensive treatment of lexis, phonology and pragmatics would not be feasible in one book as it would involve a discussion of a number of quite disparate issues, and, most importantly perhaps, grammar teaching remains the area of greatest concern to many practitioners and it is the structural syllabus that provides a basis for most foreign language instruction in Poland. Additionally, equating language forms with grammatical structures appears to be justified in view of the fact that the two research projects the findings of which are presented and discussed in Chapter Five deal with aspects of syntax and morphology. Obviously, all of this means that the terms *form-focused instruction* and *grammar teaching* are treated as more or less synonymous and will be used as such throughout this work unless clearly indicated otherwise. Although limiting the scope of our discussion in this way may be controversial, it seems warranted and perhaps even unavoidable. The reasons

for making such a choice are convincingly spelled out by Larsen-Freeman (2003: 9-10) when she writes:

I also acknowledge that choosing to focus on one subsystem of the whole has its risks. I have worried for some time about the tendency to isolate one of the subsystems of language and to study it in a decontextualized manner. Nevertheless, it is undeniably methodologically convenient, perhaps even necessary, to attend to one part of language and not to take on the whole in many diverse contexts of use (...) And I have chosen to work with grammar as the one part because it seems to me that it is the vortex around which many controversies in language teaching have swirled. Further, it is the subsystem of language that has attracted much attention from linguists (...) Above all, I have chosen to write about grammar because I have always been intrigued by grammar and the paradoxes that surround it. It is at one and the same time an orderly system and one that can be characterized by many exceptions.

## 1.2. Dimensions of grammar, grammatical knowledge and use

Since, as has been explained above, such terms as *language forms* or *formal aspects of language* are primarily used in this work to refer to target language syntax and morphology, it is clearly necessary to devote some space to a discussion of the concept of grammar itself as well as what the knowledge of grammar actually involves, and it is such issues that will be the focus of this section. Grammar being a multifaceted notion, in the first place the different ways in which it is understood will be presented, a distinction between prescriptive, descriptive and pedagogical grammars will be explicated, and the link between different conceptions of language, types of linguistic description and the relevance of such descriptions for language pedagogy will be discussed. Subsequently, some traditional beliefs concerning grammar will be challenged and a view of grammar as a static area of knowledge, or product, will be contrasted with a perception thereof as a skill or dynamic process, sometimes referred to as *grammaticization* (Batstone 1994a, 1994b) or *grammaring* (Larsen-Freeman 1991, 1997, 2003). Finally, it will be argued that the knowledge of grammar structures is by no means confined to the ability to use grammatical forms accurately and that it is much more

complex in the sense that it also encompasses semantics and pragmatics (cf. Doughty and Williams 1998c; Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman 1999; Larsen-Freeman 2001a, 2002b, 2003). It is these three dimensions which together provide a basis for the ability to use structures accurately, meaningfully and appropriately, which, again, can be termed *grammaticization* or *grammarizing* (cf. Rutherford 1987; Batstone 1994a, 1994b; Larsen-Freeman 2001a, 2002b, 2003). The section will not deal with the different theories attempting to explain how L2 grammar is learned or the diverse techniques and procedures that can be deployed in teaching it as these issues will be discussed at length in Chapters Three and Four of the present work.

### 1.2.1. Definitions, types and models of grammar

As frequently pointed out in the literature, the term *grammar* can be subject to multiple interpretations. The concept is in fact multidimensional, with the effect that it can be regarded from a range of different viewpoints, each of which sets its own priorities and offers certain assumptions about grammar as well as its relationships with meaning, use and language learning (e.g. Batstone 1994b; Odlin 1994a, 1994b; Larsen-Freeman 2001b; DeCarrico and Larsen-Freeman 2002). For one thing, theorists seeking to explain the processes of language acquisition and use, and researchers investigating the effect of particular treatments on the mastery of specific aspects of syntax and morphology frequently talk about grammar to refer to competent language users' and language learners' *subconscious internal systems*, or what could be called *psycholinguistic grammars* (Tonkyn 1994). If a number of people were asked to define grammar, however, most of them would not probably think of it as an internalized system somewhere in their minds, but, rather, associate it with prescription of some kind. Accordingly, they would in all likelihood describe the concept as a list of rules which tell us what we should or should not say, rules that should be adhered to if we want to make sure that the language we use is the standard or correct variety. Yet another sense in which the term is often used has to do with the efforts made by linguists to describe such systems, with some descriptions being broad enough to refer to the characteristics shared by all the languages of the world, as *universal grammar* purports to do, and others focusing on the systems underlying specific languages such as English. Finally, the term *grammar* is

also used to refer to particular schools of linguistic thought such as *relational grammar* (e.g. Perlmutter and Rosen 1984) or *incremental grammar* (Brazil 1995) as well as compendiums of statements about and exemplifications of particular linguistic systems intended for teachers and learners, which are called *pedagogical* or *reference grammars*.<sup>5</sup> While different interpretations of the term might imply different purposes and scope, they all seek to explain how words are formed (morphology), describe how they are combined to form sentences (syntax) and take account of function words. Some of them also include phonology and semantics, investigate grammar as it operates beyond the sentence, or acknowledge the interdependence of grammar and lexis, setting out to explore formulaic expressions that act as single lexical units, sometimes referred to as *lexicogrammar* (cf. Tonkyn 1994; Larsen-Freeman 2001b, DeCarrico and Larsen-Freeman 2002). Since the nature of the subconscious language system that learners operate with and constantly amend over time will be the focus of the two following chapters, our discussion at this point will concentrate on the other definitions of grammar as well as the different types and models of grammar for which they provide a basis.

A distinction that has to be explicated further at this point is that between *prescriptive* and *descriptive* grammar, as the two differ from each other in fundamental ways. As already noted above, prescriptive grammars make a distinction between correct and incorrect forms, codify standard and non-standard varieties, and make value judgments on the language people speak or write on the basis of the degree of its adherence to what they consider to qualify as 'good' English, Polish, etc (DeCarrico and Larsen-Freeman 2002). For instance, we might be admonished not to begin our sentences with 'and' or 'but', not to end a sentence with a preposition, never to use double negatives, or, conversely, to say 'It is I' rather than 'It is me'. Undoubtedly, prescription of this kind is of considerable value as it enables the standardization of languages, thus smoothing communication between highly different dialect regions. It also makes it necessary for learners to modify their language towards a

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<sup>5</sup> There is little agreement as to what *pedagogical* and *reference grammars* are and who they are intended for, with a lot of other terms being used. For a broader discussion of this issue the reader is encouraged to consult the articles included in Bygate, Tonkyn and Williams (1994), and particularly Chalker's (1994) contribution to this volume.

certain standard, thus simplifying the teaching and learning of languages and limiting the degree of divergence from the target. On the other hand, as Odlin (1994b: 1) puts it, "much of the time, though not always, decisions about what is good and bad are essentially arbitrary and do not often reflect any crucial principle of language or thought", and, it could be added, such rules are liable to change as language itself changes. What is more, the norms of standard usage, such as the examples of rules given above, are drawn up on the basis of the written language and an attempt to impose them on the spoken variety is frequently misguided, as native speakers do use double negative in casual conversation and are as likely to say 'If I'd have stopped' as 'If I had stopped' to introduce an unreal past conditional clause, although prescriptive rules do not allow it (cf. McCarthy and Carter 2002).

The aim of descriptive grammars is to provide a thorough account of how native-speakers use language rather than offer pronouncements on how they should use it. Therefore, they typically eschew distinguishing between correct and incorrect forms or qualifying some usages as better than others, opting instead for the value-neutral terms *grammatical* and *ungrammatical* to indicate whether or not a sentence or phrase is well-formed and possible in the language. Descriptive grammars are usually much more detailed than prescriptive ones in that they cover a much broader range of structures at much greater length, and this coverage may sometimes extend beyond morphology and syntax to include phonetics, phonology, semantics and lexis. Moreover, descriptive grammarians are often likely to offer a look at contemporary patterns of usage as well as those representing earlier stages of language development, and to include detailed descriptions of non-standard varieties such as local dialects (cf. Odlin 1994b; DeCarrico and Larsen-Freeman 2002). Obviously, providing such descriptions is no easy matter as some rules tend to apply more consistently than others depending on the level of formality, the channel of communication or even the user's intentions. Also, the exact content of such grammars will depend on their intended audience, as, for example, an academic grammar for scholars is bound to differ in its comprehensiveness and level of detail from a pedagogical or reference grammar intended for L2 learners, which has to be practical, selective, and appropriately sequenced (Leech 1994).



Although the scope of the applicability of the rules offered and the purpose for which a descriptive grammar is compiled are of great significance, the type of description proposed is reflective to a great extent of the linguists' definition of language and their particular view of what grammar is. For that reason, a distinction is frequently made in the literature between two models of descriptive grammar, depending on whether they are *formal grammars* or *functional grammars*. As Larsen-Freeman (2001b: 34) explains, "Formal grammars take as their starting point the form or structure of language, with little or no attention given to meaning (semantics) or context and language use (pragmatics)". A well-known example of such a grammar is *structuralism*, a prevalent view of language in the US in the middle of the twentieth century, based on the assumption that it is the distribution of structures in sentences rather than meaning that should provide a basis for establishing grammatical categories (Fries 1952). Another manifestation of the formal paradigm is the *generative (transformational)* theory of grammar proposed by Chomsky (1965), the most influential formal grammar of the latter half of the twentieth century and a basis for many subsequent models. In this case, the main concern lies with the unconscious knowledge of the system of language rules, or competence, and how these rules generate the syntactic structure of sentences, with the appropriate use of language in context being entirely ignored.

Functional grammars, on the other hand, "conceive of language as largely social interaction, seeking to explain why one linguistic form is more appropriate than another in satisfying a particular communicative purpose in a particular context" (Larsen-Freeman 2001b: 34). Although functional grammarians concede that grammar consists of a set of rules, they believe that forms and functions are inseparably linked, and, thus, adequate understanding of rules is only possible when they are analyzed in terms of conditions in which they are deployed. Thus, rather than focusing on the generative potential of language, they are primarily interested in the fact that the production of rule-governed sentences enables coherent communication (cf. Givón 1993). The corollary of such a communicative orientation is that the unit of analysis extends beyond the sentence and there is an attempt to explain different grammatical structures at the level of discourse. A classic example is Halliday's (1994) *Systemic-Functional Theory*, in which meaning is

central and grammar is regarded as a tool for making and exchanging different types of meaning.

In recent years a number of other descriptive frameworks have been proposed which have offered fresh insights into the structure and workings of language. One such model is *Cognitive Grammar* formulated by Langacker (1988, 1991) which views language as inseparable from other human cognitive abilities. In this formulation, grammar is a system of symbolic units which incorporates semantic and phonological structure, and where lexicon, morphology and syntax form a continuum of symbolic structures, with the result that the distinction between what is commonly referred to as grammar and lexicon becomes blurred (cf. Hubbard 1994). In the last twenty years or so the framework has been adopted by a number of linguists as a point of departure for conducting insightful analyses of problematic aspects of language structure and use, one example of which is the work of Turewicz (2000). She applies the cognitive grammar framework to her analysis of English modal verbs and tenses and argues that a framework of this kind can provide a solid foundation for a reference grammar for the teacher of English.

Even more influential has been the advent of *corpus linguistics* which relies on large collections of spoken and written natural texts, known as *corpora*, which are stored on computers and, when analyzed using a variety of computer-based tools, provide us with invaluable information about actual patterns of language use (Reppen and Simpson 2002). Among other things, comparisons of spoken and written corpora have enabled researchers to identify important differences between spoken and written grammars such as disparate distributions of some linguistic features. Furthermore, they have resulted in calls for the inclusion of the features of everyday spoken language in pedagogical grammars and proposals of lists of the possible criteria that might inform a pedagogically-oriented spoken grammar (cf. Carter and McCarthy 1995; McCarthy and Carter 2002). Corpus studies have also greatly contributed to a renewal of interest in *discourse grammar*, which attempts to analyze the functional roles grammatical structures perform in longer stretches of text in accordance with the assumption that most grammar rules are to a large extent context-dependent and reflective of how speakers and writers want to position themselves in the world (cf. Celce-Murcia 2002; Larsen-Freeman 2002a, 2003). The value of

explorations of this kind lies in the fact that they provide us with insights which are not discernable at the level of a sentence, such as that the past perfect tense is frequently used to provide a justification for the main events or a climax in a narrative (cf. Hughes and McCarthy 1998; Celce-Murcia 2002).

Finally, a major development has been the recognition of the interdependence of grammar and lexis as well as the fact that on many occasions it is lexical items that condition the regularity and acceptability of grammar, thus making many existing descriptions of language somewhat inadequate (cf. DeCarrico and Larsen-Freeman 2002). This is visible in the existence of *prefabricated units*, or *lexical phrases* which can be defined as "multi-word lexical phenomena that exist somewhere between the traditional poles of lexicon and syntax, conventionalized form/function composites that occur more frequently and have more idiomatically determined meaning than language that is put together each time" (Nattinger and DeCarrico 1992: 1). An expression like 'I wouldn't do it if I were you', for example, is probably stored as a whole unit rather than put together each time we wish to give somebody advice, and, thus, it can hardly be accounted for by models consisting of abstract rules of sentence syntax, supported by single lexical items inserted in some abstract categories.

Although not all theoretical models of grammar claim relevance for language pedagogy, their impact on the area of language instruction is as evident as it is inevitable. In the first place, a pedagogical or reference grammar is bound to be organized differently and provide quite disparate explanations of linguistic facts depending on the theoretical framework which underlies it as well as the extent to which it takes into account the findings of corpus linguistics. This influence is also clearly visible at the level of syllabus design, with some coursebooks selecting and sequencing the content to be taught in terms of structural categories such as verb tense and aspect, others opting for notions and functions, and others yet favoring topics and tasks. Theoretical frameworks of grammatical description also affect the actual teaching that takes place in the classroom, which is evident in the fact that instructional approaches influenced by formal theories, such as the Cognitive Code Method, concentrate on helping learners acquire the rules of grammar whereas those based on functional theories, such as different variants of communicative language teaching, stress fluency over

accuracy and teach language as communication (cf. DeCarrico and Larsen-Freeman 2002).

The impact of different conceptions of grammar on language teaching notwithstanding, it is very unlikely that any single theoretical framework will ever provide a satisfactory basis for pedagogy. A good example is a *pedagogical grammar* intended to satisfy the needs of second language learners and teachers, which Odlin (1994b: 11) describes as "a practically oriented hybrid drawing on work in several fields". Even though a grammar of this kind will resemble a descriptive grammar much more than a prescriptive one in that it is likely to cover a broader range of structures, it will inevitably have to contain a number of prescriptive rules that can be drawn upon to use the L2 in accordance with the native-speaker norm (Odlin 1994b). Equally importantly, more often than not, pedagogical grammars tend to be eclectic in nature relying on insights from formal, functional or cognitive grammars, and they are also likely to reflect the work done in the fields of corpus linguistics, discourse analysis and pragmatics (cf. DeCarrico and Larsen-Freeman 2002). Similar limitations on the impact of different theoretical models also apply to syllabus design and the ways grammar is actually taught, as few practitioners are likely to slavishly adhere to any particular framework, either because they are not aware of the existence of such frameworks or because they deliberately attempt to be eclectic in their work.

In other words, theoretical models such as those described above provide important insights for language pedagogy and each of them might be relevant in some respect, but it is very unlikely for any of them or for those proposed in the future to provide a sole basis for classroom practice. Such doubts about the relevance of theoretical frameworks are voiced by Widdowson (1990, 2003) when he argues that what is regarded as significant by the linguist does not automatically provide a basis for determining the aspects of language to be focused on in the classroom. He also points out that although the significance of theoretical models cannot be dismissed altogether, it is not for linguists to establish their relevance, and adds that "(...) the theoretical disciplines provide a reference for establishing *principles* of approach, but they cannot determine *techniques*" [emphasis original] (1990: 10). The situation is aptly summarized by Mitchell (2000: 291-292) when she discusses the extent to which language models can be used to guide L2 pedagogy and writes:

In the EFL world familiarity with traditional sentence grammar on the part of the language teacher is still assumed (...) However, increasing emphasis is placed on process and functional approaches to grammar (...), on the relationships between discourse-level features, lexis and sentence grammar, and on the distinctive grammar of spoken language (...) The movement to base pedagogic grammars as well as dictionaries and other learner materials on natural language corpora has reinforced these trends. However, while these developments certainly arose out of dissatisfaction with the usefulness of traditional pedagogic grammars, they are primarily driven by a combination of (a) changing views among linguists concerning the valid representation/modeling of language, and (b) concerns that language descriptions for learners should be both 'authentic' (i.e. reflect everyday usage) and 'relevant' (i.e. reflect learners' presumed needs). I am not aware of empirical research which has formally tested the relative effectiveness of, for example, discourse models of pedagogic grammar versus lexical models, nor is it clear how such strategic choices could be isolated and treated as independent variables in pedagogic research. The first theme discussed, therefore, poses some problems for the notion of 'evidence-based' practice, and suggests a continuing reliance on expert judgment and professional opinion in making some key choices for the FL curriculum.

### 1.2.2. Static *versus* dynamic views of grammar

According to Batstone (1994a, 1994b), irrespective of whether grammar is regarded as a formal, functional, or, it can be surmised, any other theoretical framework for the description of the language system, what such approaches have in common is that they all involve breaking language down into discrete parts and isolating particular forms. Even though these parts may be differently labeled, such frameworks adopt a fundamentally analytic view of language and they represent what has come to be known as a *product perspective* on grammar. He contrasts such predominantly static views with a more dynamic approach which tends to look at grammar as a tool which language users employ as they make contributions to ongoing communication, and which offers a number of choices and alternatives, enabling them to make their meanings more precise and position themselves in the world on a moment-by-moment basis. Such a viewpoint, which Batstone (1994a, 1994b) refers to as a

*process perspective* on grammar, is crucially different from earlier formulations as it looks at grammar as an on-line processing component of discourse rather than a set of building blocks that are put together to construct it (cf. Rutherford 1987). It emphasizes movement, change and the numerous factors which impinge on how grammar is used when people actually communicate with each other. Grammar understood in this way is in fact better referred to as *grammaticization* (Batstone 1994a).

Although the view of grammar as a dynamic process has been around in different guises for well over a decade and it has been gaining ground in applied linguistics in recent years (e.g. Hopper 1988; Halliday 1994; Larsen-Freeman 2002b, 2003), a rather static view of language appears to predominate in language pedagogy, with grammar being equated with a collection of products and taught accordingly. As Larsen-Freeman (2003) points out, such a state of affairs is reflective of the efforts on the part of linguists who deliberately ignored diachronic variation and sought to describe the linguistic system in a particular synchronic state in accordance with the belief that an attempt to account for all the differences in the way language is used by individuals at any given point would be an impossible task. For this reason, a distinction was frequently made between the abstract language system possessed by an ideal speaker/hearer and the actual use of language in communication, and only the former was regarded as falling within the scope of enquiry. Such a dichotomy between knowledge and behavior was first proposed by de Saussure (1916), who distinguished between *langue* and *parole*, and was subsequently perpetuated by Chomsky (1965, 1986), who set *competence* apart from *performance* and then *I-language* (internalized) from *E-language* (externalized).<sup>6</sup>

Such trends in linguistic description being dominant and constantly influencing L2 pedagogy, it is hardly surprising that there is still a tendency among practitioners to view grammar as an area of knowledge, equate grammaticality with accuracy, and make somewhat automatic associations between grammar and rules. They also frequently consider grammar to be arbitrary, believe that it primarily

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<sup>6</sup> Although Chomsky's competence is a psychological construct and, thus, cannot be equated with de Saussure's *langue*, which is social in orientation, what matters is that a similar dichotomy between knowledge and behavior is adopted and that only the abstract language system is viewed as the proper object of linguistic description (cf. Larsen-Freeman 2003).

operates at the sentence and subsentence levels, and it would probably not be very difficult to find such who would argue that only one correct answer is permissible in a given situation (cf. Larsen-Freeman 2003). Although there is undeniably an element of truth to each of such assumptions, Larsen-Freeman (2003) chooses to refer to them as myths as, in her view, only in this way can we ever hope to make grammar instruction engaging and, much more importantly perhaps, to overcome what she calls the *inert knowledge problem*. This is the term Whitehead (1929) coined to refer to the learners' inability to transfer the knowledge of grammar rules to situations, both in the classroom and outside, where spontaneous language use is required.

Larsen-Freeman (2003) argues that there is a need to underscore the complexity, rationality, non-arbitrariness, flexibility and the discursive character of grammar. This is because grammar relates as much to meaning and appropriateness as it does to accuracy, there is an underlying logic to the language system and grammatical resources are distributed in a purposeful manner. In addition, there is a lot of choice in terms of the forms to be used depending on a number of psychological and social variables such as presupposition or attitude, and the impact of grammar extends beyond the sentence since it contributes to the coherence and cohesion of discourse as well as interconnectedness of text. Closely related to such characteristics is the dynamism of the system, which has prompted Larsen-Freeman (2001b, 2003) to make a distinction between the term *grammar*, relating to the static descriptions of language, and *grammaring*, which implies that grammar is less fixed and rigid than is commonly assumed, and that it should be regarded as a skill rather than a body of knowledge comprising a collection of rules, norms, exceptions, parts of speech or verb paradigms. As Larsen-Freeman (2002b: 26) explains:

It is true that language can be described as an aggregation of static units or products, parts of speech such as nouns or verbs, for example, but their use in actual speech involves an active process. Language users must constantly be scanning the environment, observing their interlocutors and interpreting what they are hearing/seeing, in order to make decisions about how to respond in accurate, meaningful and appropriate ways, and then carry out their decisions 'online', i.e. they must then somehow activate what they have decided upon. This clearly entails a dynamic process.

For the sake of illustration, let us consider a few situations in which such dynamism of language becomes apparent. For example, a static rule might tell us that we use 'some' in affirmative sentences and 'any' in interrogative or negative ones, or it can even be more accurate in stating that the use of 'some' in an interrogative is more polite than the use of 'any' (Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman 1999). However, in real-time language use, the speaker may choose 'some' or 'any' to signal a positive or negative attitude depending on the situation and thus a sentence 'If you eat some bread, I'll cook hamburgers all week' might be understood as a bribe while its near equivalent 'If you eat any bread, I'll cook hamburgers all week' as a threat. Similarly, both the use of the present and past tense might seem to be correct in certain situations according to pedagogical grammars, but when reacting to what the interlocutor has said, the speaker might prefer to opt for the latter rather than the former to signal social, psychological or hypothetical distance (Batstone 1994a, 1995; Larsen-Freeman 2002a). Moreover, as Batstone (1994a) points out, the need for grammar in discourse depends on the amount of unshared knowledge and social distance, with sufficient context and intimate relationships making its extensive use redundant. Thus, for instance, it is enough to say 'Beautiful' when admiring a breathtaking landscape with a group of friends whereas it is necessary to say 'Your painting I saw at the exhibition last Thursday was beautiful' when talking on the phone to an artist we barely know and wish to invite to a guest lecture.

The need for dynamic models of language has also been articulated by a number of other linguists, which is visible in the work of Hymes (1972), who extended the concept of competence to cover not only the rules of grammar but also the rules of use and to refer not only to knowledge but to the ability to deploy it in communication as well. A similar position is adopted by Brazil (1995), who attempted to account for how interlocutors deploy their linguistic resources in real time to achieve their communicative goals and focused on how speech is constructed step-by-step over time. Another critic of a description of grammar as a static object is Hopper (1988), who distinguishes between an *a priori grammar* and an *emergent grammar*. The former involves a discrete set of rules, is detached from discourse, takes the sentence as a unit of analysis, is static and always fully present in the mind of the speaker, atemporal and homogenous. In contrast, the latter relies on regularity that



comes out of use in discourse and cannot be distinguished from it, adopts a clause as a unit of analysis, is a real-time activity, always in a state of flux, and heterogeneous in nature. Hopper (1998: 156) unequivocally embraces the emergent view and argues that forms of grammar "are not fixed templates, but arise out of face-to-face interaction in ways that reflect the individual speakers' past experience of these forms, and their assessment of the present context, including especially their interlocutors, whose experience and assessment may be quite different".

Although the proposals discussed above clearly refer to *real-time* or *synchronic dynamism* of languages and grammars, we should not forget that there is also *over-time* or *diachronic dynamism*, which has to do with the fact that languages undergo changes as the time passes and no matter what language we take into account, there are likely to be more or less visible differences between the system as it is known and used today and that of several centuries ago. As Larsen-Freeman (2002b, 2003) argues, there is also a third type of dynamism which is the dynamic connection made at the intersection of real-time and over-time dynamism, and which she refers to as *organic dynamism*. The point is that language does not change of its own accord nor do language users intentionally seek to make alterations to the linguistic system, although, on occasion, they might deliberately create linguistic innovations, as is the case with writers looking for new ways of expression, scientists describing new phenomena, or engineers needing labels for ground-breaking inventions. However, as individuals actually deploy their linguistic resources in day-to-day interactions, they unwittingly trigger language change, since, similarly to other naturally-occurring systems, language is a phenomenon whereby microlevel behaviors of individuals bring about change in the macrolevel system, which is the outcome of the total of interactions taking place locally (Larsen-Freeman 1997, 2002b, 2003). The organic rather than the mechanistic view of language as advocated by many static descriptions is shared by Rutherford (1987: 37), who says: "Organism is a better general metaphor than machine for what we know about language as a medium of developing interaction among humans. Machines are constructed, whereas organisms grow. Machines have precision; organisms have plasticity. Machines have linear interconnections; organisms have cyclical interconnections. And, perhaps most important of all, machines are sterile, whereas organisms are fecund".

Naturally, such disparate views on the nature of grammar and language have far-reaching implications for language teaching, with the product perspective representing more traditional approaches based on synthetic syllabi, and process perspectives exemplifying communicative, procedural and task-based approaches relying on analytic syllabi (see above and Chapter Four, section 4.2.2.). In fact, an examination of the different teaching methods that dominated L2 pedagogy in the twentieth century reveals that it is the static view of language that was and perhaps still is dominant in many classrooms, particularly those in foreign language contexts, and, thus, there is currently a marked tendency in the literature to emphasize the process view. It should be kept in mind, however, that language is in fact both a collection of products, involving the stability needed to facilitate mutual intelligibility and learnability, and a dynamic process, permitting the flexibility necessary for the creation of new meanings and pragmatic uses, and that both of these perspectives have to find their reflection in effective instruction (Larsen-Freeman 2002b). As Batstone (1994b: 225) puts it, "Both process and product perspectives are influential in language teaching. The distinction, in brief, is between the careful control of language *for* the learner (as product), and the creative use of language *by* the learner (as process)". He also argues that teaching grammar as a process and as a product are not dichotomous in nature, but, rather, form a continuum of pedagogical choices, "a framework which represents the options available to teachers who do not locate their teaching solely within the confines of a single inflexible 'method'" (1994b: 235). The consequences of the two perspectives for language instruction, or, to be more precise, their impact on the choice of particular instructional options as well as planning and curricular decisions will be further discussed in Chapter Four of the present work.

### 1.2.3. Dimensions of grammatical knowledge and use

As pointed out in the preceding section, there is a tendency among teachers, particularly those working in foreign language settings, to associate grammatical knowledge with formal accuracy and to equate grammar instruction with the explicit teaching of a set of arbitrary rules concerning linguistic forms. Not surprisingly, such a view is also shared by many students for whom L2 learning is tantamount

to achieving mastery of grammar rules which would enable them to successfully cope with completion, translation or transformation tasks typically accounting for the vast majority of items on school achievement tests and some proficiency examinations (cf. Pawlak 2002, in press). It is perhaps quite a common experience for anyone who has ever done private tutoring that when students are asked what it is that they would like to concentrate on in their lessons, without a moment's hesitation, many of them point to grammatical structures such as tenses, conditionals or modal verbs. What is more, they are rarely concerned with their inability to deploy such structures in meaningful context-embedded communication, but, rather, expect to be provided with explanations and exercises which will enable them to apply linguistic forms in context-reduced classroom activities (Cummins 1981), the performance of which is required for academic success. In consequence, grammar is often perceived as a linguistic straightjacket in the sense that the failure to adhere to its rules may result in "the penalty of being misunderstood or of being stigmatized as speaking an inferior or inadequate form of the target language" (Larsen-Freeman 2002a: 103).

Beyond doubt, grammar is related to language forms and formal accuracy and it would not be rational to deny it. After all, the inability to use the TL accurately in some spheres of life may have grave academic, economic or social consequences such as poor grades in a language class, failure to be admitted into a university department, difficulty in expressing our thoughts precisely, embarrassment and condescending looks from everywhere when we read a paper in an international conference, or reduced employment opportunities. It is for these and many other reasons that teaching learners how to manipulate language forms, or developing what Cummins (1981) has called *cognitive-academic language proficiency* (CALP), is so widely regarded as necessary, and, although there is much controversy in this area, it can reasonably be argued that providing students with rules is one way of accomplishing this goal.

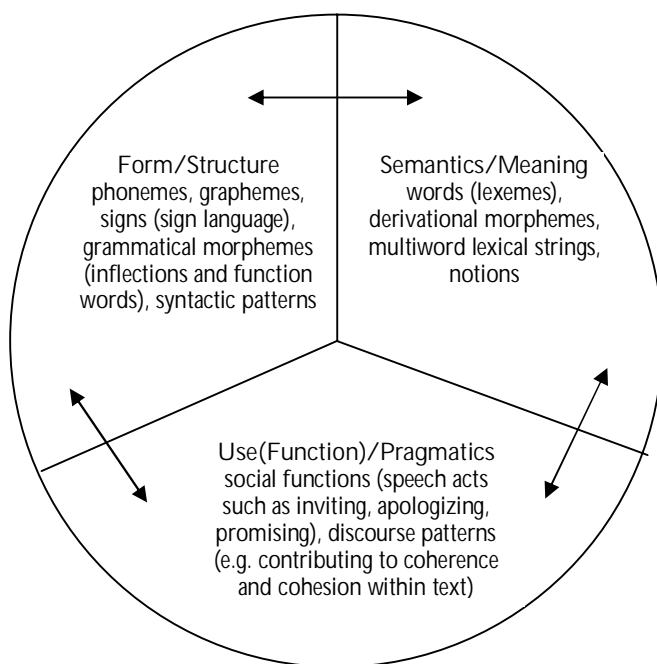
This does not mean, however, that grammar has to do solely with formal accuracy and that the teaching of grammar should only be confined to giving rules. If this common misconception, which in fact underlies much of the current teaching practice in Poland, were to be accepted, language learners would never be able to use grammatical structures spontaneously, discover the potential of grammar in helping them express diverse notional and pragmatic

meanings, or start viewing it as a powerful tool enhancing the effectiveness of interactions with other people rather than something to be feared or mastered only to do well in testing situations. Besides, as Larsen-Freeman (2002a) points out, there is a relatively small set of rules where learners have little or no choice such as, for instance, the use of the bare infinitive following most modal verbs or the use of 'are' rather than 'is' with plural nouns. What is more, even such seemingly restricted rules allow some flexibility depending on the intentions of the speaker and the particular context, as is illustrated in the fact that both a singular and a plural verb can follow a collective noun depending on whether we think of it as a particular unit of people.

Recognizing the inadequacy of accounts which reduce grammar to a set of meaningless, decontextualized, static structures or a collection of prescriptive rules and doing justice to the enormous complexity of the grammatical system, Larsen-Freeman (2003: 34) suggests treating "the morphological and syntactic subsystems as a resource for making meaning in a context-sensitive manner". In effect, grammatical structures are viewed as three dimensional, with morphosyntactic forms (structure), the meanings these forms express (semantics) and the appropriate uses of these forms in specific contexts (pragmatics) being equally important and enabling speakers or writers to use the language not only *accurately* but *meaningfully* and *appropriately* as well (cf. Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman 1999; Larsen-Freeman 2001a, 2002a, 2003).

As can be seen from Figure 1.3., such a framework takes on the form of a pie chart, where each of the three wedges represents *structure*, *semantics* and *pragmatics*. The structure wedge contains information about how a given structure is constructed (i.e. morphology), how it is sequenced with other structures in a sentence or text (i.e. syntax) as well as the phonemic or graphemic patterns relevant to a particular grammar point. As for the semantic wedge, it tells us about the lexical meaning of a structure, or its definition that can be found in a dictionary, and its grammatical meaning, which is conditioned by the use of the structure itself. In addition to dealing with words or lexemes, this dimension may provide us with information about derivational morphemes such as 'un-' or '-less', lexical phrases such as 'to tell you the truth', and notions such as 'time', 'size' or 'space'. Finally, the pragmatic dimension has to do with what people mean by the language they

use in a particular context, with the term 'context' encompassing social factors (e.g. the power differential between the interlocutors, degree of imposition, etc.), linguistic discourse context (e.g. the language that precedes or follows a given structure in the discourse), and situational context (e.g. the number of people present, message content, communicative activity, etc.) (cf. Spencer-Oatey and Žegarac 2002). The prototypical units of this dimension include social functions (e.g. offering) and discourse patterns (e.g. reflecting a particular genre or register) (cf. Larsen-Freeman 2001a; Larsen-Freeman 2003).



*Figure 1.3. Prototypical units of the three dimensions of grammatical knowledge and use (adapted from Larsen-Freeman 2003: 35).*

What is important, the three dimensions are not arranged in an ascending hierarchy as is often the case with traditional characterizations of language, and, as the arrows connecting the wedges indicate, there are interconnections between them with a change in any one dimension having repercussions for the remaining two. Larsen-Freeman (2003) relates the existence of such inter-relationships to the dynamic nature of grammar and refers to it as a

*linguistic heuristic principle.* As she puts it, "A difference in form always spells a difference in meaning or use (...) Conversely, if the meaning or use wedges change, this will affect the form wedge. The system is holistic (...) The parts of the system mutually interact" (2003: 44). The adoption of such a tripartite scheme makes it clear that "although there are prototypical units that can be associated with each of the three dimensions, in order to arrive at a complete understanding of any of the units, it must be described from all three perspectives, not just its 'prototypical home'" (Larsen-Freeman 2003: 36). The potential of the framework lies in the fact that using the pie chart as well as a set of questions related to the three wedges, such as 'How is the unit formed?', 'What does it mean?' and 'When/Why is it used?', it is possible for language teachers to map the form, meaning and use of any grammatical structure they set out to teach (Larsen-Freeman 2001a, 2003). The benefits of this conceptualization of grammatical knowledge and use have also been acknowledged by other researchers, as is visible in Doughty and

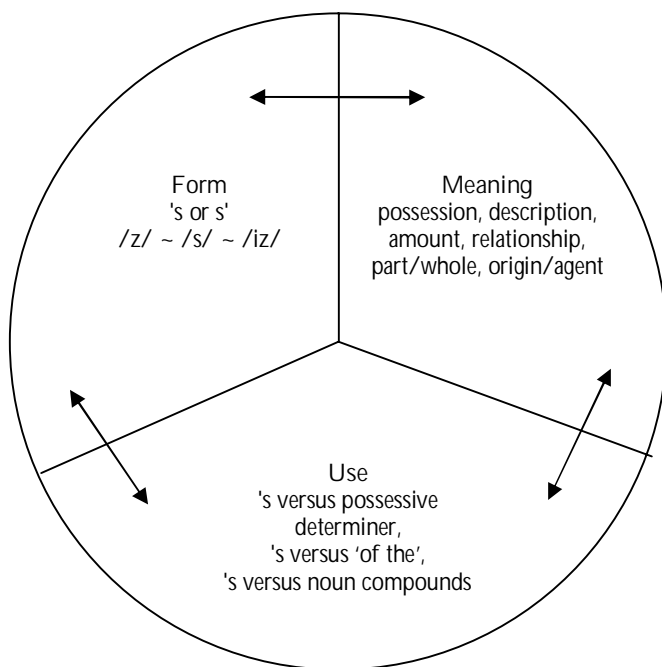


Figure 1.4. *Form, meaning and use of the English 's possessive (adapted from Larsen-Freeman 2001a: 253).*

Williams's pronouncement that "focus on form includes *forms*, *meaning*, and *function* (or *use*)" [emphasis original], or their assertion that "the degree of effectiveness (especially over the long term) of focus on form ultimately depends on the level of integration of the learner's attention to all three aspects of form, meaning, and function in the TL" (1998c: 244-245).

As an illustration of how the framework can be applied in practice and how useful it can be for language teachers and their learners, let us see how the three questions associated with each of the three wedges in the pie chart can be answered about the 's possessive form, which is introduced relatively early when teaching English to beginners (analysis based on Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman 1999; Larsen-Freeman 2001a, 2003). As illustrated in Figure 1.4., in order to form possessives in English we need to add 's to regular singular nouns and irregular plural nouns not ending in 's', and an apostrophe to regular plural nouns and some singular nouns ending in the sound /s/. Phonetic patterns are also important here as, depending on the phonetic context, the 's possessive can be realized as /z/, when it occurs after voiced consonants or vowels, /s/, when it is preceded by a voiceless consonant, and /ɪz/, when it follows sibilants. What could perhaps also be included in the form wedge as presented by Larsen-Freeman (2001a: 253) is that the possessor precedes the possession, and that, when ownership is shared, only the last noun is inflected (e.g. 'Betty and Mary's cottage') as opposed to situations where the possession of separate entities is mentioned (e.g. 'Betty's and Mary's cottage'). When analyzing the meaning of the feature in question, it becomes clear that it does not only denote possession, as teachers frequently proclaim, but also description (e.g. 'a hunter's lodge'), amount (e.g. 'a week's holiday'), relationship (e.g. 'Jane's cousin'), part/whole (e.g. 'my sister's head'), and origin/agent (e.g. 'Spielberg's latest movie'). It might also be necessary to pay attention to crosslinguistic differences in the ways possession is signaled and the fact that not all items may be described in this way.

Perhaps the most interesting insights can be obtained when answering the question concerning the use of the 's possessive and trying to explain why speakers choose this form in particular situations rather than other structures which convey the same meaning, such as possessive determiners, the periphrastic 'of the' form or noun compounds. For example, possessive pronouns are

usually preferred when it is clear from the context who or what we are referring to, but, at the same time, it would be rather impolite to say 'I am really enjoying his book' rather than 'I am really enjoying Peter's book' in Peter's presence (cf. Larsen-Freeman 2003). Another observation concerns the generalization frequently encountered in coursebooks and teachers' explanations that the inflectional 's possessive is usually used when the possessor is human whereas non-human head nouns require the use of the periphrastic possession with 'of the'. Although this is often undoubtedly the case, the rule does not apply across the board as native speakers of English often prefer to use the 's with inanimate possessors when they are performing some action (e.g. 'The plane's departure was delayed') and, conversely, the 'of the' form rather than the inflection is used on formal occasions with human possessors, as in 'the works of Shakespeare'. Moreover, many native speakers would not regard a sentence like 'The book's pages are torn' as incorrect and would probably not hesitate to utter it themselves, and there are many fixed phrases where the 's possessive is used with inanimate head nouns such as 'a stone's throw' or 'the water's edge'. Also, it is important to distinguish between contexts and situations in which noun compounds (e.g. 'table leg') are more appropriate than the two forms of the possessive.

As noted above, using the pie chart and the questions concerning the form, meaning and use of a language feature, we can classify facts about many other grammatical structures and a number of such detailed analyses concerning, among other things, existential 'there', passive constructions, phrasal verbs or demonstrative pronouns can be found in recent publications dealing with the teaching of grammar (e.g. Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman 1999; Larsen-Freeman 2001a, 2002a, 2003). Such an approach is of considerable value for foreign language pedagogy as it enables teachers to become aware of facts they may have thus far ignored and enriches their understanding of the scope and multidimensionality of grammatical structures, which, in turn, can guide their decisions regarding what and how to teach. On the other hand, the fact that teachers walk into the classroom equipped with detailed knowledge about the form, meaning and use of a given structure does not mean that all of this information should be imparted to their learners, let alone that this should be done in a single lesson, although it is perhaps not uncommon for some teachers to do



exactly this when teaching grammar. To take the 's possessive as an example once again, it is not difficult to envisage the confusion and disorientation of a group of beginners who are provided with all the data mentioned in Figure 1.4. in one go. Therefore, selectivity is at a premium, but not the kind of selectivity which involves a primary focus on one dimension and a simultaneous exclusion of others, as is often the case in Polish schools, where the form of a structure gets emphasized over semantics and pragmatics. Rather, the teacher should use the available facts concerning a particular feature to identify the learning challenge(s) it poses for the students, thus adhering to what Larsen-Freeman (2003: 45) calls the *challenge principle*. As she puts it:

The challenge principle says that one of the three dimensions almost always affords the greatest long-term challenge to language students. It is important to remember that, with any given piece of language, all three dimensions of language are present. It is impossible to separate form from meaning from use. However, for pedagogical reasons, it is possible to focus student attention on one of these dimensions within a whole. Of course, for a given group of students the immediate challenge may differ from the overall long-term challenge, depending on the characteristics of the students, such as their native language and their level of target language proficiency. However, it is possible to anticipate which dimension is likely to afford the greatest long-term challenge for all students, and it is important to do so, for being clear about the overall challenge will give you a starting point and suggest an approach that is consistent with the long-term challenge.

Another important point is that there is evidence that the different dimensions of grammatical knowledge may be learnt differently, with form requiring a lot of exposure and practice, meaning being amenable to associative learning, and use benefiting from developing sensitivity to context (cf. Larsen-Freeman 2001a, 2003). This, of course, has important implications for the planning and implementation of the teaching of the three dimensions. It also has to be pointed out that a decision to distinguish meaning and use is not uncontroversial, and it is particularly the latter that may cause considerable problems to teachers, especially those who are not native-speakers as they frequently do not have the feel for the TL and they themselves may have never been taught pragmatic aspects

of grammar.<sup>7</sup> However, as Larsen-Freeman (2003) points out, viewing grammar as multidimensional is not intended as a threat to teachers and may in fact contribute to their professional development by making them aware of those facets of grammatical structures where their knowledge is inadequate and further insights need to be obtained, which, in effect, is bound to enhance the quality of grammar instruction.

Finally, and most importantly perhaps, we should keep in mind that teaching grammar should not be confined to providing students with facts about grammar points, irrespective of whether such facts concern their form, meaning, and use. Although having a profound understanding of the three dimensions is crucial to language teachers and it is perhaps warranted to pass on some of this information to our students, grammar instruction should not focus on developing a static knowledge of rules and paradigms, but, rather, it should aim to have students use specific structures accurately, meaningfully and appropriately, or engage in what Larsen-Freeman (1991, 2001a, 2003) refers to as *grammaring*. This is in line with the dynamic conceptions of grammar discussed in the preceding section, which view grammar as a skill rather than a body of knowledge and grammar teaching as skill development rather than transmission of this knowledge from teachers to students. In the words of Larsen-Freeman (2001a: 255), "By thinking of grammar as a skill to be mastered rather than a set of rules to be memorized, we will be helping ESL/EFL students go a long way toward the goal of being able to accurately convey meaning in the manner they deem appropriate". How exactly this skill can and should be developed will be the leading theme of Chapter Four.

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<sup>7</sup> In fact, Ellis (2005a) avoids making the distinction between meaning and use of a structure and chooses to refer to the two dimensions as *semantic* and *pragmatic meaning*, respectively. While the former describes the meanings of lexical items or specific grammatical structures, the latter relates to the highly contextualized meanings that are created in the actual act of communication.

### 1.3. Historical perspectives on form-focused instruction

Now that the terminological confusion concerning the term *form-focused instruction* has been addressed, it has been made clear what the notion is meant to refer to in the present work, and relevant comments have been made on the nature of grammar, the applicability of its theoretical models as well as the dimensions of grammatical knowledge and use, it appears justified to devote some space to a discussion of the changing views on the place of formal instruction in foreign language pedagogy and the diverse positions on how grammar can most profitably be taught. In addition to exploring how "the changing winds and shifting sands" (Marckwardt 1972: 5) of diverse theoretical positions and research findings have impacted the practice of grammar teaching as reflected in particular teaching methods, the section will also focus on the main reasons for two major shifts in this regard. These are the abandonment of what could be called *grammar is everything pedagogy* (Doughty 1998), which took place in some educational contexts in the 1970s, and a revival of interest in the role of FFI which has been on the rise since the early 1990s. Since many of the issues discussed, such as the universal constraints on language acquisition (i.e. developmental orders and sequences), the weaknesses of purely communicative approaches, the theoretical and empirical arguments in favor of instruction, or the value of specific options in grammar teaching, will be elaborated upon in the subsequent chapters, the overview presented below is not exhaustive and mainly serves the purpose of highlighting the past and present trends as well as providing justification for their appearance. Nevertheless, the adoption of a historical perspective on the place of formal instruction in language pedagogy is useful as it sets the scene for a more thorough discussion of pertinent theoretical positions and research findings presented in Chapters Two and Three. Not less importantly, it shows that many approaches share common features and most of them can make valuable contributions to pedagogy, which provides support for an eclectic view of teaching grammar, a position advocated throughout this work.

Most foreign language instruction over the centuries could best be characterized as traditional language teaching and has employed some kind of what Stern (1992) labels the *analytic strategy* and what Long (1991) refers to as a *focus on forms approach* (see section 1.1. above).<sup>8</sup> As Doughty (1998: 129) explains, "The traditional approach held two important tenets: that language is a system of linguistic forms and functions and that classroom learners, especially adults, can profit from studying these linguistic features explicitly". The two assumptions were responsible for basing language instruction on synthetic syllabi (Wilkins 1976) and were directly related to the belief that "learners, presented with a sequence of forms and functions planned in advance and presented one by one by the teacher or through materials, will eventually build up a complete linguistic repertoire" (Doughty 1998: 129). In other words, it was assumed that language learning was a process of *accumulating entities* (cf. Rutherford 1987) in which linguistic features were learnt one at a time and, once taught, they neatly fitted into the developing language system, and, ultimately, underlay the ability to use the L2 in face-to-face communication.

Obviously, such views were not always implemented in a uniform fashion, as is evidenced by the fact that the methods exemplifying what we have referred to as *traditional language teaching* differ along a number of dimensions, such as the level of explicitness of presentation of the targeted structure, the choice of linguistic categories on the basis of which the syllabus is constructed as well as the principles according to which items representing those categories are sequenced. Beyond doubt, the most explicit approach to grammar instruction was adopted by the proponents of the Grammar Translation Method, derived from the practice of teaching the classical languages of Latin or Greek and based on grammatical

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<sup>8</sup> It has to be acknowledged that the term *traditional language teaching* is perhaps somewhat unfortunate as it is understood very differently by researchers. This is visible in the fact that while Doughty (1998) uses it to refer to all kinds of language instruction that preceded the advent of communicative language teaching and it is also used in this way in the present work, other applied linguists confine it to the kind of instruction characteristic of the Classical and Grammar Translation Methods (e.g. Celce-Murcia 2001b; Hinkel and Fotos 2002b). Besides, as Doughty (1998: 129) herself observes, "by now, communicative language teaching is also, in a general sense, quite traditional".

analysis and translation of written forms (cf. Hinkel and Fotos 2002b). Even the Direct Method, intended as a reaction to the GTM and its failure to produce learners who could actually communicate in an L2, drew upon a very similar set of assumptions. Although this method was based on the conviction that the second language learning experience should emulate that of first language (L1) learning, opted for inductive teaching of grammar and insisted on the use of the TL in the classroom, it was also to a large extent analytic in nature and "relied just as much on an explicit teaching strategy as did the grammar-translation method" (Stern 1992: 328). A high degree of explicitness could also be found in the Cognitive Code Method, which built on Chomsky's linguistics and his concept of Universal Grammar, and regarded conscious grammatical knowledge as essential to acquisition (Ellis 1990; Stern 1992). The same can be said about the Reading Approach, which arose in response to the problems in implementing direct methods and mainly focused on the development of reading comprehension together with the necessary grammar and vocabulary (Celce-Murcia 2001b).

Examples of methods which also represented the focus on forms approach but, at the same time, mostly utilized what Stern (1992) refers to as the implicit teaching strategy are Audiolingualism and the Oral-Situational Approach, both of which emphasized "relatively low-level cognitive activities in which thinking about language was less important than acquiring automatic responses" (Stern 1992: 328). Also, many of the humanistic approaches of the 1970s (e.g. the Silent Way, TPR) relied heavily on implicit grammar instruction while still following structural syllabuses and subscribing to the view that learning was a mirror image of teaching. The introduction of notions, functions and discourse features as the organizing elements of language teaching curricula and the resultant focus on the pragmatic aspects of language, inspired, among other things, by the insights from Speech Act Theory (cf. Spencer-Oatey and Žegarac 2002), did not herald a departure from the traditional assumptions concerning the nature of L2 acquisition and an abandonment of the analytic teaching strategy. After all, such approaches still involve the identification and sequencing of linguistic features irrespective of their nature as the organizing elements of the syllabus, and, similarly to other analytic methods, "either largely ignore language learning processes or tacitly assume a discredited behaviorist model" (Long and Robinson 1998: 16).

Dissatisfaction with the structure-by-structure view of L2 learning inherent in such traditional approaches began to gradually evolve in the mid-1960s and reached its pinnacle in the 1970s and 1980s when their underlying assumptions were called into question and the analytic strategy itself was attacked on practical, empirical and theoretical grounds. In the first place, it was found that although language learners had no difficulty in memorizing or verbalizing grammar rules, reached high levels of accuracy when working on structure-based exercises and demonstrated the knowledge of structures on classroom discrete-point tests, they typically failed to deploy this knowledge in spontaneous language use and developed little communicative ability (e.g. Terrell, Baycroft and Perrone 1987). The pervasiveness of this lack of transfer or the *inert knowledge problem*, as we have referred to it above, clearly shows that knowing about language cannot be equated with being able to use it in communication and is familiar to most teachers, particularly those working in foreign language contexts, where "English [and other foreign languages of course] is learned mainly through translation into the native language and memorization of grammar rules and vocabulary" (Hinkel and Fotos 2002b: 2). As most foreign language teachers in Poland would probably attest, such problems are by no means confined to structures that are formally and conceptually difficult, such as conditional sentences or modal verbs of probability, but are often related to grammatical morphemes such as the third person '-s' ending or the '-ed' past tense marker, the form and function of which are quite transparent.

This lack of transfer of formal knowledge gained in the classroom to in-class communicative tasks and out-of-class situations is perhaps the most damaging testimony to the ineffectiveness of traditional approaches, particularly when set against the relative success of naturalistic language learners, let alone that of children acquiring their mother tongue. After all, there is little point in studying a foreign language if this does not result in the ability to use it in real-life contexts, and present-day learners do not typically invest time, effort and money in this undertaking to get acquainted with a set of rules and vocabulary items, but, rather, to become capable of accomplishing specific communicative goals in their personal and professional lives. A very fitting comment on this state of affairs comes from Larsen-Freeman (2003: 8) who points out: "Besides the frustration that this [lack of transfer] engenders in

students and teachers, I would imagine that this contributes to a great deal of attrition from language study. Students become discouraged when they cannot do anything useful with what they are learning".

Apart from the criticisms related to the effectiveness of instruction addressed above, the shortcomings of traditional L2 pedagogy have also been discussed in terms of the findings of empirical studies investigating the processes of acquisition demonstrated by naturalistic and classroom learners. A crucial finding in this respect was that grammatical morphemes in English as a second language are acquired in a fixed order regardless of the learners' language background, age or context of instruction, and, even more importantly from the teacher's point of view, that such orders are impervious to pedagogic intervention. In addition, it has been found that learners pass through a number of intermediary stages when acquiring such linguistic features as negation, question formation, relative clauses, tense and aspect or word order both in English and other languages, a subsequent observation being that even though instruction can speed up the progression through a stage, it does not result in out-of-sequence acquisition (cf. Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991; Ellis 1994; VanPatten 1998; Pienemann 1998; Gass and Selinker 2001; see section 2.2. in Chapter Two for a detailed discussion).

What is more, such studies clearly showed that learners do not simply move from no knowledge of a TL structure to its full mastery in a linear fashion, but, rather, pass through stages of nontargetlike use, often regress to the previous stage of interlanguage (IL) development, start using erroneously what they appear to have mastered, and it is not uncommon for their speech to be characterized by a great deal of variation (cf. Doughty 1998; Long and Robinson 1998; Larsen-Freeman 2001a). Researchers also found that, on top of being powerless to alter the natural route of acquisition, instruction in the form of intensive practice of isolated items out of the context of their use was plagued with numerous other problems. These included the short duration of pedagogical treatments, overgeneralization of new forms to wrong contexts, disappearance of forms which appeared to have been mastered, and the development of pseudo-rules that were wrongly inferred by the learners from the drills and exercises they performed (cf. Doughty 1998). The findings of research into the processes of L2 develop-

ment are best summarized by Long and Robinson (1998: 17), who say:

(...) morphosyntactic development involves prolonged periods of form-function mapping. Progress is not unidirectional. There are often lengthy periods of highly variable, sometimes lexically conditioned, suppliance of even supposedly easily taught items like English plural '-s' (Pica 1983; Young 1988), zigzag developmental curves (Sato 1990), temporary deterioration in learner performance (Meisel, Clahsen and Pienemann 1981), backsliding (Selinker and Lakshamanan 1983), and so-called U-shaped behavior (Kellerman 1985). Even a good deal of lexical acquisition is not sudden and categorical but exhibits developmental patterns (...). None of this sits very well with simplistic notions of 'what you teach, when you teach it, is what they learn'.

Research findings of this kind as well as the dismal failure of the traditional approaches to develop learners' communicative ability when compared with the success of uninstructed acquirers provided an impetus for the appearance of new theoretical positions and the emergence of teaching methods and approaches which attempted to emulate in the classroom the conditions characteristic of the natural language learning experience. Undoubtedly, the best-known and most comprehensive of such positions was Krashen's Monitor Model, which was popularized in a number of books and articles in the 1980s and early 1990s (e.g. Krashen 1982, 1985, 1992, 1993, 1994) and whose influence on the development of natural and purely communicative approaches can hardly be overestimated. Since Krashen's views will be discussed at length in the following chapter, suffice it to say at this point that he accorded the main role in the development of learner linguistic competence to natural language acquisition by means of real communication and exposure to samples of the TL at the right level of difficulty, and attributed minimal value to code-focused instruction in the form of rule explanation, production practice and error correction. Although very similar views had been advocated earlier (e.g. Newmark and Reibel 1968; Jakobovitis 1970) and found their expression in the Cognitive Anti-Method as well as the new type of pedagogy that arose in California in the 1970s to accommodate the needs of huge numbers of immigrants, it was Krashen's theory that contributed to



the rise and spread of communicative language teaching approaches in many parts of the world (Hinkel and Fotos 2002b).

As was the case with traditional methodology, communicative pedagogy came in many guises, the most important of which included the content-based instruction of Canadian immersion programs, Krashen and Terrell's (1983) Natural Approach or Prabhu's (1987) Communicational Teaching Project in Southern India (see Chapter Two, section 2.4. for details). Although such approaches may have differed in terms of teaching content and classroom treatment, what all of them had in common was their reliance on analytic rather than synthetic syllabi (cf. Wilkins 1976) and the belief that "people of all ages learn languages best, inside or outside the classroom, not by treating the languages as an object of study, but by experiencing them as a medium of communication" (Long and Robinson 1998: 18). The effect of such a position was the rejection of grammar teaching and error correction as unnecessary or even deleterious.

Influential as they became in some quarters, teaching approaches placing a virtual taboo on form-focused instruction did not withstand the test of time and, in due course, they themselves came under severe criticism, which was the outcome of research into the long-term benefits of naturalistic acquisition and instruction that is entirely meaning-focused (cf. Ellis 1997; Doughty 1998; Long and Robinson 1998, Mitchell 2000; Hinkel and Fotos 2002b; see section 3.1. in Chapter Three for a more extensive discussion of the weaknesses of such approaches). Studies conducted by Schmidt (1983) and Pavesi (1986), for example, showed that although prolonged natural exposure does lead to the development of fluency, it does not guarantee the emergence of targetlike grammatical competence, with instances of premature stabilization and failure to incorporate certain linguistic features from the available input well in evidence. Also, research into Canadian immersion programs (e.g. Harley and Swain 1984; Swain and Lapkin 1989; Swain 1991) demonstrated that achievement in the development of receptive skills is typically not matched by that of productive skills. In particular, it has been found that even though the children enrolled in such programs develop native-like levels of comprehension and fluency, they usually fail to attain targetlike grammatical competence and discourse patterns, and make persistent errors in speaking and writing even after many years of instruction. There are also claims

that purely communicative pedagogy may be insufficient for the development of the advanced levels of proficiency and accuracy indispensable in the academic, professional, or vocational spheres of life (Ellis 2002a). The problems of the premature *push toward communication* (Higgs and Clifford 1982) at the expense of linguistic accuracy as advocated by the communicative and natural approaches as well some versions of task-based instruction are lucidly explained by Skehan (1996: 21), who comments:

This approach places a premium on communication strategies linked to lexicalized communication. These strategies provide an effective incentive for learners to make best use of the language they already have. But they do not encourage a focus on form. They do not provide an incentive for structural change towards an interlanguage system with greater complexity. The advantages of such an approach are greater fluency and the capacity to solve communication problems. But these advantages may be bought at too high a price if it compromises continued language growth and interlanguage development. Such learners, in other words, may rely on prefabricated chunks to solve their communication problems. But such solutions do not lead to longer-term progress, even though they do lead to resourcefulness in solving problems.

The inadequacy of instruction that is entirely meaning-focused led to a reemergence of interest in form-focused instruction in the 1990s and there is currently a growing realization among researchers that a combination of analytic and experiential teaching strategies is needed if learners are to develop full-fledged communicative competence in the TL (cf. Stern 1992; Doughty 1998; Ellis 2001b; Hinkel and Fotos 2002b; Burgess and Etherington 2002; Klapper and Rees 2003). That such a change of heart has taken place is reflected in the fact that there have been attempts to introduce elements of FFI into immersion programs (e.g. Wright 1996; Harley 1998) and methodologists see a place for grammar instruction within the framework of present-day communicative methodology (e.g. Savignon 2001) as well as different variants of task-based instruction (e.g. Willis and Willis 2001; Skehan 2002). Even the Lexical Approach, which views language as a collection of chunks combined to produce continuous texts and considers meaningful communication as indispensable to L2 learning, stops short of completely denying the value of grammar instruction (Lewis 1993, 1998). As Michael Lewis (1998: 14), the originator and main

advocate of this approach points out, "(...) it is a gross misreading of the text to pretend that asserting the value of lexis is in any way to deny the pedagogic value of grammar (...) I totally dissociate myself from any suggestion that *The Lexical Approach* [title of Lewis's book] denies the value of grammar and (...) any suggestion that 'Lexis is the answer', or even that there *is* an answer" [emphasis original].

As pointed out in the introduction to this chapter, however, there is little consensus as to how and when grammar should be taught to be most beneficial to language development, the only generally accepted principle being that the revived interest in formal instruction should not be interpreted as an encouragement to revert to the explicit teaching of isolated forms. One proposal, which is encapsulated in Long's (1991) distinction between a *focus on form* and a *focus on forms* (see section 1.1. above), is to draw learners' attention to linguistic features when they are engaged in meaning-centered communication rather than follow a set syllabus. This, in turn, is closely related to the belief that providing learners with opportunities to interact in the target language and getting them to modify their erroneous utterances can in itself be a source of grammar learning because it promotes hypothesis-testing, allows the noticing of the gaps and holes in the developing interlanguage systems, encourages syntactic rather than semantic processing of the input, and fosters conscious reflection on language use (cf. Swain 1995, 1998, 2000; Doughty 2001). Other researchers tend to view grammar teaching as a form of consciousness-raising, and argue that although instruction may not result in the immediate ability to use a specific feature in a native-like manner, it enables learners to develop awareness thereof and such noticing is likely to initiate the restructuring of implicit linguistic knowledge (cf. Schmidt 1990; Sharwood-Smith 1993; Ellis 1998; Skehan 1998). Finally, a lot of attention has recently been paid to investigating the use of grammatical structures in naturally occurring spoken and written discourse and applying the findings of such research to pedagogy, an undertaking which has been in great measure made possible by advances in corpus linguistics (cf. Carter and McCarthy 1997; Celce-Murcia 2002, Larsen-Freeman 2002a, 2003). A more extensive discussion of the theoretical positions underlying some of these developments as well as the research endeavors aimed at assessing

the utility of the instructional options they have yielded will be presented in Chapters Three and Four.

To conclude the discussion of the views on the role of FFI in foreign language pedagogy, it has to be emphasized that although the trends and dilemmas presented in this section constitute a fairly accurate picture of the changing theoretical positions and the methodological proposals they generated, they have not been equally influential in all parts of the world. This caveat applies in particular to foreign language contexts such as the Polish one, where communicative approaches have only had a marginal impact on classroom methodology, and where a range of teaching techniques characteristic of the Grammar Translation Method or Audiolingualism are still being widely employed (Fotos 1998; Skehan 1998; Fotos 2002; Hinkel and Fotos 2002b; Pawlak in press). Although there is undoubtedly a lot of variation in the classroom practices utilized by individual teachers, in many such settings communicative language teaching is only beginning to be perceived as a viable instructional option and, thus, the belief, expressed by Doughty (1998: 134), that "Today, second language classes organized solely on the basis of features of grammar hopefully are few and far between" should perhaps be regarded as wishful thinking rather than an objective comment on classroom reality. As a consequence, the main challenge in the foreign language classroom is often not as much ensuring that learners are provided with opportunities to focus on form in the context of largely communicative activities, modify their utterances in real-life interactions or become aware of the functioning of grammar in discourse, as getting them to begin to use the target language meaningfully. As Fotos (1998, 2002) argues, foreign language settings with their limited in- and out-of-class exposure mainly require 'shifting the focus from forms to form' rather than trying to employ a primarily communicative framework, despite the fact that it has proved quite successful in many second language contexts.

## 1.4. Rationale for investigating form-focused instruction

The discussion of the changing views on the role of grammar instruction presented in the preceding section indicates, to some extent at least, how risky and short-sighted it often turns out to be to uncritically accept pedagogical solutions offered by SLA theorists and researchers and blindly apply them in the language classroom, giving little consideration to the extent to which they are relevant to a particular educational context. This is most clearly visible in the widespread adoption of the teaching principles based on behaviorist psychology, the premature rejection of formal instruction in reaction to the empirical findings concerning the nature of L2 acquisition and the claims of Krashen's Monitor Theory, or, more recently, the belief that the focus on form approach is the best way to teach grammar and that it is task-based rather than structural syllabuses that should provide a basis for instruction. Although such theory- or research-derived pedagogical proposals have turned out to be quite effective in some contexts, there are settings in which they have either failed dismally or have never really been adopted. According to Widdowson (1990: 25), the main reason for such a state of affairs is that "(...) there are no universal solutions. We should not expect that research will come up with recipes and remedies which will work whatever the circumstances. We should recognize that the validity of research findings is always *relative* (...)" [emphasis original].

Obviously, this is not to say that research findings are irrelevant to language teaching, but, rather, that there is a gap between research and pedagogy. Therefore, instead of being directly applied, the insights provided by empirical investigations should be used to help practitioners identify the problems they face in their classrooms and offer what Stenhouse (1975: 25) called *provisional specifications* to be tested out in practice. To quote from Widdowson (2003: 8) once again, "(...) applied linguistics is not a matter of the application but the appropriation of linguistics for educational purposes. Its aim is to enquire into what aspects of linguistic enquiry can be made relevant to an understanding of what goes on in language classrooms". In the opinion of Ellis (1997, 1998, 2001a),

form-focused instruction is an area of enquiry which is well-suited to bridge, or at least narrow, the gap between SLA theory and research on the one hand and language pedagogy on the other, as it brings together the concerns of researchers and teachers. This is because, apart from testing theories of second language acquisition, much of the recent research has focused on the effectiveness of different ways of teaching grammar, an issue that is of immediate relevance to practitioners.

The reason why the relationship between research and pedagogy is an uneasy one and why the two are so difficult to reconcile is related to the fact that researchers and teachers inhabit very different social worlds, operate from very different knowledge bases and pursue very different agendas (cf. Crookes 1997; Ellis 1997, 1998). Researchers typically work in universities or other institutions of higher education, where academic achievement is evaluated in terms of the quantity and quality of the research produced and, even more importantly in some quarters, the number of papers read at international conferences and articles published in professional journals. As a result, most researchers are mainly interested in ensuring that the studies they conduct meet the accepted criteria of reliability and validity, and they are seldom concerned with demonstrating their relevance to pedagogy, making their findings accessible to teachers, proposing ways in which they can enhance the quality of instruction, or investigating issues which are of interest to practitioners. Teachers, on the other hand, operate in classrooms, where immediate solutions have to be found, the effectiveness of particular tasks has to be evaluated on the spot, plans are subject to constant modification, and instantaneous decisions regarding what and how to teach are indispensable. Being forced to deal with the contingencies of classroom discourse as well as the constant pressure from parents and school authorities demanding tangible outcomes, they mostly rely on their own experience to develop a set of beliefs about how a second language is learnt and how it should best be taught. Even though it is possible to find teachers who blindly defer to theoretical and empirical recommendations, most of them believe that research is of little value either because it is inaccessible or simply does not attempt to address their concerns.

The gulf between researchers and teachers can also be explained in terms of the type of professional knowledge that

second language acquisition research and language pedagogy seek to develop (Eraut 1994; Ellis 1997, 1998). Similarly to other academic disciplines, SLA theory and research aim to contribute to the development of *technical knowledge*. In the words of Ellis (1998: 40), this kind of knowledge is "explicit, that is, it exists in a declarative form that has been codified (...) it can be examined analytically and disputed systematically (...) is acquired deliberately either by reflecting deeply about the object of enquiry or by investigating it empirically (...)". Moreover, since technical knowledge is general in nature and produces principles that can be extrapolated to a range of particular cases, it is not easy to fall back upon when tackling the problems of everyday living, such as deciding on the most beneficial course of action when a language lesson is in progress. A good example of this kind of difficulty is the research-generated distinction between *errors* and *mistakes*, which is often drawn upon to make recommendations concerning error correction, but which is of little value to practitioners who have to decide in a split second whether they should provide treatment on a specific form in learner oral output.

In contrast, language pedagogy is primarily concerned with advancing *practical knowledge*, which is "implicit and intuitive (...) is acquired through actual experience by means of procedures that are poorly understood [and] it is fully expressible only in practice, although it may be possible, through reflection, to codify aspects of it" (Ellis 1998: 40). Being proceduralized, practical knowledge can be readily employed to handle particular cases and, therefore, it is drawn upon extensively in the work of practicing professionals such as doctors, lawyers and, most importantly, teachers. Although teachers do rely on technical knowledge in planning their lessons, choosing materials and coursebooks or selecting particular instructional options, once they find themselves in the classroom, they have to deal with unpredictable situations and make a number of on-the-spot decisions to accomplish a successful lesson, and, under such circumstances, it is the rapidly accessible practical knowledge that is likely to be employed. Since, as research suggests (e.g. Pennington and Richards 1997), teachers generally find it difficult to integrate technical and practical knowledge and, conversely, researchers are reluctant to utilize practical knowledge in the creation of technical knowledge, the distinction encapsulates the divide which often exists between the two communities. Thus, exploring the nature of the

relationship between the two types of knowledge is perceived as instrumental in determining the ways in which the gap between research and teaching can successfully be bridged (cf. Ellis 1997, 1998).

According to Weiss (1977), there are three possible ways in which research can be used to inform practice:

- 1) *decision-driven model*, where research is undertaken to address a practical issue of immediate relevance to teachers;
- 2) *knowledge-driven model*, which advances the knowledge base of the discipline and takes little heed of practical concerns;
- 3) *interactive model*, where technical and practical knowledge are combined in the performance of a professional activity of some kind.

As Ellis (1997) points out, although the early SLA research was motivated by pedagogical concerns and written up in a way accessible to practitioners, much of the recent work in the field is knowledge-driven and serves the purpose of constructing and testing specific theories of language learning as well as developing research methodology. What makes teachers suspicious about the value of such research is not only the fact that its goals have little to do with classroom practice, as is the case with the investigations of SLA based on Universal Grammar, but also the complexity of the methodology employed and the incomprehensibility of the language used for reporting the findings of such studies. Additionally, as research on innovation in language learning demonstrates (e.g. Markee 1994; Stoller 1994), practitioners are likely to reject research-based pedagogic proposals which they perceive as unfeasible in a particular context, incompatible with their teaching style and ideology, excessively complex or imposed from the outside. What is more, when applied linguists, as they often do, attempt to unilaterally impose ready-made solutions on the profession, there is a growing feeling among practitioners that language teaching is, as Thornbury (2001a: 403) put it, "at risk of being hijacked by men in white coats", and this only enhances the distrust and suspicion on their part.<sup>9</sup> For these reasons, as Ellis (1997: 32) argues, "Relevance

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<sup>9</sup> The author is aware that the picture of researchers and practitioners presented in this section is slightly idealistic. In order to understand the existing gulf between research and pedagogy, however, it is necessary to look at a prototypical teacher and researcher and this is exactly what is being done here.



must necessarily be determined not from within SLA but from without – by demonstrating how the findings of SLA address the needs and concerns of practitioners". And, however problematic and difficult to accomplish the interrelation of technical and practical knowledge might be, it is pursuing the interactive model that perhaps holds out the most promise of narrowing the gap between SLA theory and research and classroom practice.

Drawing upon Widdowson's (1990) framework for relating disciplinary theory and language pedagogy and his discussion of the roles of an applied linguist, Ellis (1997, 1998) proposes several ways in which SLA research findings can be applied to classroom practice. For one thing, applied linguists can attempt to make research accessible to practitioners by compiling summaries of the main research findings structured around pedagogical concepts rather than those identified by research itself. Another possibility is utilizing research-derived data in constructing theories of instructed language acquisition and advancing specific pedagogic proposals on their basis, which, however, have to be treated as suggestions rather than prescriptions. There is also a role for different kinds of classroom-centered research, which enables applied linguists to empirically test the value of various pedagogic proposals, and which is likely to be viewed as more relevant to teachers' needs than pure research.

However, the most beneficial way of integrating technical and practical knowledge appears to be what Widdowson (1990) calls *insider research*, more commonly known as *action research*, or research that teachers themselves conduct in their own classrooms. If practitioners adopt such a role, the research findings which they regard as interesting or relevant to their teaching situations can serve as *provisional specifications* (Stenhouse 1975) to be tested out in their own classrooms, and it does not really matter if they just informally try out theory- and research-derived pedagogical proposals or engage in a systematic action-research cycle such as the one Carr and Kemmis (1986) describe (cf. Nunan 1990; Crookes 1993; Ellis 1997, 1998). Yet another way in which the interrelation of the two types of knowledge can be accomplished is *participatory research* where "a researcher and a teacher collaborate inside the teacher's classroom, pooling their expertise in a manner that gives the teacher control over decision-making" (Ellis 1998: 57). Obviously, if the worlds of the researcher and the practitioner are to be truly brought

together, the research questions in such an endeavor should be related to the problems posed by the particular instructional context rather than selected on the basis of theory or previous research. On the other hand, teachers must not reject the usefulness of theoretical developments and research findings out of hand as "they have authority as teachers only to the extent that they carry in their heads (small or otherwise) specialist knowledge and distinctive expertise, to the extent that they are intellectually fine-tuned to their task" (Widdowson 2003: 2).

Although the feasibility of narrowing the gulf between research and pedagogy depends to a large extent on the manner in which the former is employed to inform and improve on the latter, relevance is also likely to be the function of the area of enquiry, as some research findings are, for either objective or subjective reasons, far more interesting for teachers than others. As mentioned at the beginning of this section, the study of form-focused instruction constitutes a sub-field of SLA research where the agendas of teachers and researchers largely converge, with a number of recent studies addressing the kinds of questions that teachers badly want to have answered, and this in itself is a sufficient reason why this line of enquiry should vigorously be pursued. Besides, as the present writer (Pawlak 2005a) found in his study of practitioners' views on the relevance of SLA theory and research to classroom practice, grammar instruction constitutes one of the areas which foreign language teachers deem to be most in need of empirical investigation.

In fact, such sentiments should not come as a surprise. After all, ever since the principles and practices of the Grammar Translation Method were called into question, there has been an endless controversy as to whether grammar instruction is necessary and, if so, what form it should take to be most beneficial for learners. First of all, in the face of research evidence showing that learners follow their own built-in syllabuses which do not reflect those followed in the classroom, a question arose as to whether it made sense to provide formal instruction and this issue was very relevant to practitioners since it is clearly a waste of time and effort to teach something learners cannot utilize. Once research had shown that FFI was beneficial, a far more interesting issue from the point of view of teachers became what types of intervention are the most useful and what grammatical structures should be targeted as

only in this way could they make suitable pedagogical choices when planning their lessons. Somewhat surprisingly, also in this respect researchers seem to have lived up to practitioners' expectations as a number of recent studies have explored the value of specific methodological options in teaching grammar. Even though this change of focus may not have been primarily motivated by the need to inform classroom practice, it has still considerably strengthened the interface between research and pedagogy.

Consequently, FFI research is worthwhile not only because it can potentially contribute to making teaching more effective but also because it may constitute the necessary first step in bringing together the social worlds of teachers and researchers. Even in this case, however, caution has to be exercised when it comes to applications. As Ellis (1997: 46) so aptly puts it, "The real value of form-focused research lies in the provisional specifications it affords. These constitute a resource that teachers can draw on in planning courses and lessons. But (...) they can never be more than one of several inputs into the decision-making process and they must ultimately be subject to empirical evaluation carried out by teachers themselves".

### 1.5. Aims and methodology of research into form-focused instruction

Since, as has been argued in the preceding section, research into form-focused instruction has such an important role to play not only in enhancing the quality of teaching practice but also in reconciling the goals and agendas of practitioners and researchers, this preliminary chapter would clearly be incomplete without a brief overview of the evolving aims of this kind of enquiry as well as the methodological choices typically employed in such investigations. The decision to devote some space to such issues also appears to be warranted in view of the fact that all of the chapters of this work will abound in references to numerous studies exploring various aspects of FFI, and it is important for the reader to have an understanding of how they relate to other studies in the field and interpret their findings against the background of the utilized research paradigms. Not less importantly, the familiarity with the key aspects of FFI research is indispensable for fully appreciating

and assessing the aims, design and findings of the research projects discussed in Chapter Five. For all of these reasons, the present section will first provide a brief historical perspective on the changing objectives of research into form-focused instruction, and, then, discuss the most common research methods employed in the studies conducted in this area. Although such a focus will necessarily entail drawing upon a number of research projects with the purpose of exemplifying the issues discussed, this will be done for illustrative purposes only and, therefore, neither the findings nor the implications of these investigations will be discussed in detail. In fact, many of the studies mentioned below will be cited again and reviewed at greater length in the remaining parts of this work.

### 1.5.1. Evolution of research into grammar teaching

As illustrated in the relevant SLA literature, three main strands can be distinguished in the early research into form-focused instruction, namely *global method studies*, *comparative studies* of instructed and naturalistic learners, and *classroom process research* (Ellis 2001b, 2004a). Since in the 1960s and 1970s there was a consensus among applied linguists that effective language teaching had to involve a focus on linguistic forms, the question was not whether grammar teaching was necessary but, rather, how grammatical structures should most profitably be taught. More precisely, researchers attempted to resolve what Diller (1978) termed the *language teaching controversy* and concentrated on investigating the effectiveness of explicit grammar instruction, as exemplified by the Grammar Translation Method, in comparison with implicit grammar instruction, as advocated by the Audiolingual Approach. Consequently, large-scale research projects were undertaken with the purpose of comparing the long-term learning outcomes of the two methods and their variations (e.g. Scherer and Wertheimer 1964; Hauptman 1970; Smith 1970), but, due to methodological flaws, their findings were mostly inconclusive (cf. Allwright 1988; Ellis 1994).<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The main shortcoming of such studies was that they primarily focused on the *product* in the form of test results and paid scant attention to the *process*, or what actually transpired in the classroom. As a result, there was often little difference between the teaching practices employed in classes supposed to be taught by means of different methods. Predictably, this diminished the differences in the ultimate performance of the groups of

At around the same time, inspired by studies into how children acquired their native languages, SLA researchers turned their attention to investigations of how learners acquired second languages in untutored situations, frequently with an eye to utilizing the insights gained in this way to improve classroom practice (e.g. Hatch 1978). Once naturalistic learners were found to follow their own internal syllabus irrespective of their age and L1 background, the obvious question to ask was whether the provision of formal instruction was at all justified. This resulted in studies which compared the ultimate levels of achievement of instructed and uninstructed learners as well as such which explored the extent to which grammar teaching affected the natural order of acquisition. While the former showed that learners who received instruction not only learned more rapidly, but were also likely to reach higher levels of proficiency (see Long 1983b, 1988; Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991; Ellis 1994, for reviews of such research), the latter suggested that FFI was powerless to change the order and sequence of acquisition (e.g. Felix 1981; Ellis 1984b; Pienemann 1984), which only pointed to the need for further theorizing and research in this area.

Finally, the important lessons learnt from the failure of comparative method studies resulted in the development of the third strand of early FFI research, known as *classroom process research*, which "was directed at obtaining accurate and detailed information about how instruction was accomplished through the observation and description of teaching-learning events" (Ellis 2001b: 4). At the outset, studies of this kind primarily focused on corrective feedback and produced classifications of the various treatment options available to the teacher (e.g. Allwright 1975; Chaudron 1977; Long 1977), but, with time, their scope was extended to include other aspects of classroom discourse (e.g. van Lier 1988), and, ultimately, to relate these to learning outcomes (e.g. Allen et al. 1990).

In the late 1980s and early 1990s investigations into the effectiveness of form-focused instruction became much more focused as researchers designed a number of experimental studies which sought to determine whether learners learned the specific linguistic features that were targeted (Ellis 1997, 2001b; Doughty

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students being compared and considerably impaired the reliability of the findings (cf. Allwright 1988; Ellis 1994).

2003). While some of these research projects were theoretically motivated and aimed to verify Krashen's claims that formal instruction does not affect the learner's acquired system (e.g. Lightbown 1985; Pica 1985), others addressed more pedagogical considerations in an attempt to determine whether grammar teaching and error correction could help learners acquire particularly problematic forms (e.g. Harley 1989; Day and Shapson 1991). On the whole, the findings of such research demonstrated that FFI resulted in definite gains in the accurate production of the targeted structure in both planned and unplanned language use provided it did not violate the natural sequence of acquisition (cf. Ellis 1994, 1997).

In the light of such findings, it is not surprising that research on the effects of formal instruction on accuracy was accompanied by studies which specifically examined its impact on the order and sequence of acquisition. Some studies of this kind compared instructed and uninstructed learners (e.g. Pavesi 1986; Ellis 1989), and found, similarly to the earlier investigations in this area, that those who received instruction "followed the same orders and sequences of acquisition as naturalistic learners but that they proceeded further and more rapidly" (Ellis 2001b: 6). This question was also addressed by experimental research, as exemplified by the work of Pienemann and his associates (e.g. Pienemann, Johnston, and Brindley 1988). Such investigations showed that although developmental patterns are immutable, instruction targeting the structures next to be acquired in the natural order can speed up the rate of progress along the sequence, and provided a basis for the Teachability Hypothesis (see Chapter Three, section 3.3.2). However, the findings of the so-called *projection studies* drawing on linguistic accounts of implicational universals showed that FFI directed at a marked structure in a hierarchy (e.g. relative clauses) resulted not only in the acquisition of that structure but also the associated less marked properties (e.g. Jones 1992).

The focus of more recent studies into form-focused instruction, namely those conducted in the late 1990s and in the first years of the new millennium, has largely been influenced by important developments in SLA theory which began to draw upon information processing and skill-learning models derived from cognitive psychology. Such theoretical positions as the Noticing Hypothesis (Schmidt 1990, 1994, 2001), Input Processing Theory (VanPatten 1996, 2002), skill-building perspectives (e.g. Johnson

1996; DeKeyser 1998), the acknowledgement of the importance of negative feedback (e.g. White 1991), and the revised version of the Interaction Hypothesis (Long 1996) all contributed to a change in the issues researchers were likely to explore. Consequently, studies have been designed to investigate such questions as 'Do some kinds of form-focused instruction work better than others?', 'In what ways can input (positive evidence) be enhanced to promote noticing?', and 'What kinds of feedback (negative evidence) promote acquisition?' (Ellis 2001b: 8-9; 2004a). In other words, in recent years there has been a shift of focus from whether grammar teaching works to what types of formal instruction are most effective in promoting L2 development, which, as shown in the preceding section, made FFI research even more relevant to the concerns of practitioners.<sup>11</sup> Norris and Ortega (2001: 158-159) enumerate six main areas that type-of-instruction research addresses:

- 1) the effectiveness of an implicit and explicit approach for short-term L2 instruction (e.g. Alanen 1995; Robinson 1996);
- 2) the impact of raising learners' metalinguistic awareness of specific L2 forms (e.g. Fotos 1994; Swain 1998);
- 3) the comparison of the effects of drawing learners' attention to specific forms during meaning-focused tasks and an exclusive focus on meaning and content (e.g. Leeman et al. 1995; Williams and Evans 1998);
- 4) the role of negative feedback and the effectiveness of its different types (e.g. Nobuyoshi and Ellis 1993; Doughty and Varela 1998; Pawlak 2004a, 2004b);
- 5) the value of input processing instruction as opposed to traditional grammar explanations and practice (e.g. Cadierno 1995; VanPatten and Oikkenon 1996);
- 6) the effectiveness of comprehension and production practice for learning grammatical structures (e.g. DeKeyser and Sokalski 1996; Erlam 2003a).

Although most of the studies investigating such issues aim at testing various theory-driven hypotheses, and, thus, are mostly experimental in nature, the number of descriptive studies has grown

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<sup>11</sup> This is not to say, of course, that other lines of enquiry are not being pursued, as exemplified by a very recent study by Rodrigo, Krashen and Gribbons (2004), which compares the effectiveness of traditional and comprehensible-input approaches.

considerably in recent years, as exemplified by detailed analyses of how teachers manage to integrate form and meaning in classroom discourse (e.g. Lyster and Ranta 1997; Ellis, Basturkmen and Loewen 2001a, 2001b; Lyster 2001; Panova and Lyster 2002; Loewen 2003; Pawlak 2005b). Descriptive research is also represented by the still rather infrequent studies investigating the processes of teacher decision-making concerning the selection of grammatical structures to be taught as well as the timing and manner of instruction (e.g. Borg 1998, 1999). In addition, as Norris and Ortega (2001: 204) argue, "A more complex agenda has begun to unfold within L2 type-of-instruction research that investigates not only the relative effectiveness of particular instructional techniques but also the potential impact of a range of moderator variables". Consequently, researchers have begun to explore particular instructional options as a function of learner characteristics such as age, language aptitude, intelligence, learning style, or memory (e.g. Skehan 1998; Robinson 2002), linguistic factors such as the relative structural complexity of L2 forms (e.g. de Graaff 1997; DeKeyser 1998, 2005), cognitive variables such as the stage of interlanguage development and the degree of noticing (cf. Pienemann 1998; Schmidt 2001), and, finally, such pedagogical choices as the timing, duration and intensity of instruction (e.g. Lightbown 1998; Doughty 2001).

Commenting on the three decades of research into the learning and teaching of language forms, Ellis (2001b, 2004a) observes that a very pleasing development has been the extension of the research agenda to include languages other than English (e.g. German, French, Japanese, Spanish, etc.) as well as different contexts of instruction (i.e. both second and foreign language contexts). He goes on to add, however, that FFI research also suffers from major limitations such as the paucity of replications and follow-up studies, the application of diverse research methodologies as well as the lack of agreement on how instruction and its contributions should be operationalized, with the effect that the findings produced have frequently been contradictory or inconclusive. Nevertheless, as he argues, "two findings are pervasive (...): (1) FFI, especially of the more explicit kind, is effective in promoting language learning, and (2) FFI does not alter the natural processes of acquisition" (2001b: 12). Similar points are echoed in comprehensive surveys of research into form-focused instruction (e.g. Spada 1997;



Norris and Ortega 2000, 2001), which, however, also point to a number of design and reporting flaws in the studies reviewed and recommend caution about interpreting their findings and offering generalizations on their basis. As regards future directions for FFI research, Ellis (2004a, 2006) postulates that investigations of this kind should be brought even closer to the concerns of practitioners by addressing key pedagogical issues (e.g. integrating form-focused instruction into communicative activities, its intensity, etc.) and that they should finally attempt to resolve the controversy over the relationship between explicit and implicit linguistic knowledge. Not surprisingly, he also sees the need for improving the quality of FFI research in terms of its design, the measurement of learning outcomes and reporting conventions, as well as conducting longitudinal studies and more frequently employing descriptive and introspective paradigms. It is some of those methodological issues in FFI research which will be the focus of the subsequent section.

### 1.5.2. Methodological choices in studies of form-focused instruction

According to Ellis (2001b), similarly to other kinds of classroom-oriented research, empirical enquiry into form-focused instruction represents two broad traditions, namely *confirmatory* and *interpretative research* (Anderson and Burns 1989), although, as he admits, *hybrid research* combining the features of the two traditions is also becoming quite common. The former is interventionist in nature and can be found in correlational and experimental studies, where, for the sake of validity, reliability and generalizability, the learning context is manipulated through random distribution of subjects into experimental and control groups, and measures are taken to carefully control extraneous variables (Ellis 1997). Also, the data collected in the course of such studies are typically subjected to quantitative analysis frequently drawing upon inferential statistics, which is the reason why some researchers prefer the term *quantitative research* when referring to such investigations (e.g. Brown and Rodgers 2002). As regards the latter, it eschews intervention and is evident in descriptive and ethnographic studies of naturally-occurring classroom discourse as well as those investigating teachers' cognitions. Since in research of this kind generalizability is not the primary concern and the main goal is "(...) to analyze the data as they are

rather than compare them to other data to see how similar they are" (van Lier 1988: 2), there is no attempt to control for extraneous variables and qualitative analysis of the data is emphasized, which by no means excludes the possibility of quantification, as the term *qualitative research* (Brown and Rodgers 2002) might somewhat misleadingly indicate. Although, as mentioned in the preceding section, most FFI studies have drawn upon the confirmatory tradition, in recent years interpretative research has been gaining ground largely due to the failure of experimental studies to produce conclusive results.

Typical examples of the confirmatory tradition in FFI research are *comparative studies*, which set out to compare the ultimate level of achievement of instructed and naturalistic learners as well as the order and sequence of acquisition they displayed, and *experimental studies*, which aimed to investigate the impact of pedagogic intervention on the acquisition of specific forms and the effectiveness of different instructional options. As for *comparative studies*, recent years have witnessed their demise, which was the corollary of the methodological problems inherent in their design. This is because not only were they based on the often unwarranted assumption that the setting in which an L2 is acquired determines the type of the learning experience learners receive, but also failed to include information on the type of formal instruction provided, thus being unable to satisfactorily account for differences between classroom learners and naturalistic acquirers (Ellis 2001b). *Experimental studies*, on the other hand, represent the dominant paradigm in FFI research, and they are either carried out in laboratory settings, in which case both real and artificial languages can be involved, or in actual classrooms, where, for ethical reasons, the object of enquiry can only be a real language.

The benefit of laboratory-type investigations of form-focused instruction lies in the fact that they are true experiments in which "all factors save one are held constant" (Long and Larsen-Freeman 1991: 20). Therefore, a cause-effect relationship between the treatment and outcome can be determined and the findings obtained can be generalized to other contexts and populations. What such studies lack, however, is *ecological validity* from the point of view of practitioners, particularly when relevance to pedagogy is to be claimed. As for experimental research conducted in a classroom setting, it often takes the form of *quasi-experiments*, where there is no

random assignment of subjects to groups but one or more control group is included, or, less frequently perhaps, *pre-experiments*, where a one-group pretest-posttest design is usually employed (cf. Long and Larsen-Freeman 1991). In contrast to true experiments, studies of this kind are characterized by high ecological validity, but there are so many intervening variables at play during regularly-scheduled lessons that it is impossible to control all of them, which limits the generalizability of the findings and makes replication problematic.

Irrespective of whether experimental research is conducted under laboratory-type conditions or in real classrooms, it should satisfy a number of stringent design and reporting requirements, but these, as Norris and Ortega (2000, 2001) demonstrated, often fail to be met, which makes it difficult to compare the results obtained and draw definitive conclusions. In many cases, such a situation is the outcome of exploring multiple variables such as clusters of instructional options, which might accommodate the needs of teachers who draw upon a number of techniques to accomplish a successful lesson, but makes it difficult to assess the value of specific treatments. Other woes of experimental FFI research include treatment incompatibility, inconsistent operationalization of constructs, failure to incorporate pre-tests, post-tests or control groups, the lack of adequate information about the design or little clarity when it comes to reporting the findings (cf. Ellis 2001b; Norris and Ortega 2001).

Interpretative FFI research typically comes in the form of *descriptive* and *introspective* studies, both of which tend to adhere to the *emic principle* (i.e. they attempt to understand the workings of the social context through the perspectives of the participants) and the *holistic principle* (i.e. they try to interpret classroom processes in terms of the natural surroundings), and, thus, their findings may be seen as more readily applicable to specific instructional contexts (Ellis 1997). *Descriptive research* can focus on the output produced by learners who are provided with instruction of some kind or concentrate on classroom interaction with the purpose of determining how teachers handle FFI. Although, in the former case, it would be logical to conduct *longitudinal studies* of classroom learners, such investigations are few and far between due to the fact that the classroom provides learners with scant opportunities for language production, their utterances are very short, and they produce highly controlled speech under such conditions. For these reasons, it is

often necessary to resort to what Corder (1981) calls *clinical elicitation*, where the analysis focuses on the language learners use to describe pictures, write compositions or engage in structured conversational interviews. As Ellis (2001b) points out, while the strength of this line of enquiry is that it enables researchers to explore the effect of instruction on interlanguage development, it is hard pressed to pinpoint the aspects of pedagogical intervention which foster acquisition unless a detailed study of instructional discourse is also undertaken.

As for descriptive studies of FFI discourse, they typically center upon the occurrence of preemptive and reactive focus on form, and "involve the recording and transcribing of samples of instructional discourse and the construction of data-driven taxonomies of discourse moves, instructional options, teaching strategies, etc." (Ellis 2001b: 30). Even though such studies are invaluable as they provide us with important data on how formal instruction is accomplished in context, their drawback is that they result in a proliferation of descriptive taxonomies, which makes it difficult to make comparisons and advance generalizations. Another problem is connected with the fact that the effect of the intervention can only be investigated in terms of learner uptake, or successful incorporation of the correct form into subsequent output, which does not constitute sufficient evidence of permanent interlanguage change.

Finally, *introspective studies* "seek to examine what beliefs the classroom participants have about FFI and what their views and interpretations of specific FFI events are" (Ellis 2001b: 31). Studies of this kind target both teachers and learners, and they rely on think-aloud protocols, interviews or questionnaires as instruments of data collection, which might be lacking in the validity and reliability of the data but provide important information about the participants' cognitions.

Although the two traditions discussed by Ellis (2001b) are the most prominent in FFI investigations conducted to date, there is also a place for *action research*, which, as stated earlier in this chapter, is indispensable if the gap between research and pedagogy is to be bridged, and constitutes the only way to ultimately explore the value of various instructional options in specific local contexts. Perhaps the most beneficial type of research of this kind is *practical action research* (Carr and Kemmis 1986) or *teacher research* (Hopkins 1985), in which "research is undertaken by teachers in their own classrooms

with a view to improving classroom practices" (Ellis 1997: 23).<sup>12</sup> Since action research involves direct intervention and a low degree of control, with the researcher systematically observing the outcome of the action taken (van Lier 1988; Allwright and Bailey 1991), there are criticisms that the quality of such investigations will fall short of the established standards and, thus, the usefulness of their findings will be limited (Brumfit and Mitchell 1990). However, as Wells (1994b: 28) argues "(...) the principal criterion for evaluating a piece of action research is not the significance of its findings for others, but rather the value of the experience of undertaking it for the researcher him or herself". Thus, when the aim is to improve on a local teaching situation rather than to generalize the findings to other contexts, the concerns for reliability, validity and trustworthiness are no longer of pivotal importance and are superseded by the need for utility and credibility (Norris 1990; Crookes 1993). Because the goals of such investigations are so dissimilar to those pursued by formal research, it is understandable that those who engage in the latter are often reluctant to accept their findings. As Ellis (1997: 206), argues, however, "Perhaps SLA researchers should treat the results of action research as hunches or perspectives to be investigated subsequently more formally (...) In this way, researchers and teachers can achieve a degree of reciprocity, each accepting the other's work as affording provisional specifications to be tested out in their own respective arenas". In fact, it is such assumptions that motivated the two studies reported in Chapter Five of this work.

As the aim of investigations into FFI, irrespective of the research paradigm employed, is to examine the effect of a particular instructional treatment on learners' acquisition of a specific linguistic form or a range of such forms, there is clearly a need to operationalize *acquisition* and to decide in what ways it will be measured. As far as the first of these issues is concerned, Gass and Selinker (2001: 58) explain that acquisition can be defined in three ways:

- 1) the first appearance of a correct form in creative speech, or its onset;

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<sup>12</sup> Other types of action research are *technical action research*, where "outside researchers co-opt practitioners into working on questions derived from theory or previous research" (Ellis 1997: 23), and *critical action research* "that is not only directed at improving practice but at emancipating those that participate in it" (1997: 25).

- 2) a certain percentage of accurate forms;
- 3) provision of a particular morpheme in over 90% of obligatory contexts in a sample of a learner's speech.

From the point of view of researchers investigating the effectiveness of different types of grammar instruction, the first and last are not satisfactory, as (1) does not take into account accuracy and it is difficult to establish whether a particular utterance is creative or formulaic, and (3) was designed for measuring acquisition in morpheme studies, it is too static, and, thus, incompatible with the aims of present-day FFI research. For these reasons, in most studies of form-focused instruction, acquisition is equated with *target language accuracy*, which reflects the assumption that "the more accurately a learner uses a feature, the more it has been acquired" and is perhaps closer to teachers' understanding of the term (Ellis 2001b: 33). Although such a definition is not problem-free as it ignores the variability and non-linearity of IL development, it is perhaps the only logical solution in cross-sectional studies, where "the linguistic performance of a large number of subjects is studied and the performance data are usually collected at only one session" (Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991: 11).

When it comes to measuring acquisition in studies of form-focused instruction, a variety of *grammaticality judgment*, *comprehension* and *production tests* can be used (cf. Ellis 2001b, 2005a). As far as the first measure is concerned, it involves tapping learners' intuitions about the L2 by asking them whether or not a given utterance is well-formed, and, despite being widespread in FFI research, it entails problems with the validity and reliability of the data collected (cf. Gass 1994). When comprehension measures are used, sets of sentences are designed which learners can only correctly comprehend if they are able to process the target structure successfully. For example, learners might hear a sentence in the passive voice and be requested to choose a picture which illustrates the right kind of relationship between the subject and the object. Finally, production measures range from those where learners are requested to work on highly mechanical exercises, in which case they largely fall back on their explicit knowledge, to such where spontaneous use of language is necessary and, thus, implicit knowledge is tapped.

Since the three types of instruments require the deployment of different types of linguistic knowledge in quite different modes, it is not surprising that they are likely to produce disparate results. As

Norris and Ortega (2001: 198) point out, "There can be little doubt that the particular test or measure utilized within any individual study plays a central role in observations and eventual interpretations about the effectiveness of L2 instructional treatments". Moreover, many FFI studies measure gains in the use of the target structure on tasks requiring highly controlled language production, which, as mentioned above, does not permit drawing conclusions about the impact of the treatment on the subjects' implicit representations, and, where multiple measures are used, sometimes quite disparate findings are obtained depending on their nature. Beyond doubt, such a state of affairs is a serious weakness of form-focused instruction research, and, as Ellis (2001b: 35) argues, "(...) until FFI studies, as a matter of routine, include some measure of learners' ability to process a structure under real operating conditions (as in spontaneous speech), doubts will remain about the nature of the reported instructional effects". Additionally, Doughty (2003) makes the point that the validity of instructed SLA outcome measures is further compromised by the fact that they are excessively target-language oriented and focus on the accurate production of specific forms. In her view, such a situation is not satisfactory since learners' progress in the mastery of a linguistic feature should be studied in a more interlanguage-sensitive fashion, where the movement through developmental stages can be traced.

As this overview indicates, the methods of research into form-focused instruction reflect those utilized in other areas of second language acquisition, but, at the same time, they have been changing together with the aims that empirical inquiry in this field has sought to attain. Although many of the changes have contributed to making research findings more relevant to practitioners, extended our knowledge of what grammar instruction involves, and resulted in improvement in the design of the studies, a lot still remains to be done to enhance the quality of such investigations. According to Norris and Ortega (2000: 81-82; 2003: 748-749), this would have to involve using simple designs that investigate only a few variables, including pre- and posttests and true control groups, designing studies with the replication of variables in mind, and estimating and reporting the reliability of outcome measures. They also point out that researchers should choose analytic and interpretative techniques that provide accurate answers to the research questions posed, incorporate estimates of error, report enough information about

variables for comparisons to be made and replications to be conducted, and supply the data necessary to enable further interpretation and accumulation of study findings. In their view, it is only by following such guidelines that we can ever hope that the domain will be better able to provide meaningful insights into the areas FFI research seeks to explore.

## Conclusion

The aim of this introductory chapter has mainly been to provide a backdrop for the more detailed discussion of the theoretical positions, research findings, instructional options and pedagogic designs to be undertaken in the subsequent chapters of the present work. It has also been intended to provide the reader with the necessary know-how to better appreciate, assess, interpret and put in proper perspective the aims, design and findings of the two research projects investigating the effectiveness of different ways of teaching grammar reported in the last chapter. In order to accomplish these goals, first an attempt was made to address the terminological difficulties concerning such terms as *form-focused instruction* as well as *language form* itself which are sometimes interpreted quite disparately in the SLA literature, and to explain what exactly they are meant to refer to in this book. Since FFI is typically equated with the teaching of grammatical features, this was followed by a discussion of the different definitions, types and models of grammar as well as their relevance for language pedagogy, the static and dynamic perspectives on grammar and the dimensions of its knowledge and use. Subsequently, a short overview of the changing views on the role of formal instruction in second and foreign language pedagogy was presented, the rationale for carrying out research into grammar teaching was spelled out, and, finally, the evolving aims of this line of enquiry were discussed and the key issues regarding the methodology of such investigations were highlighted. The discussion of many of these areas could only be cursory either because they are not the main concern of the present work, as is the case with the nature of grammar and the status of different descriptions of language, or because they are going to be addressed at greater length in the following chapters, as is the case with the theoretical models of language learning and the research endeavors they have inspired.



Still, several important points emerge that should be kept in mind when interpreting the diverse theoretical proposals and research findings regarding form-focused instruction as well as assessing their relevance to pedagogy.

In the first place, the terminological confusion in the SLA literature should make the consumers of theory and research, practitioners and applied linguists alike, circumspect about what different authors have to say about the value of grammar teaching and the effectiveness of particular instructional options. After all, it is not uncommon for researchers to understand form-focused instruction in quite divergent ways without always making this explicit, and to adopt the same or very similar labels to describe very different instructional treatments. Secondly, caution should be exercised about uncritically accepting theoretical models of grammar and the related descriptions of language as a basis for determining what and how should be taught. Rather, they should be viewed as only one of the many available resources that might but do not have to be drawn upon to improve upon L2 pedagogy. Such a stance is strongly advocated by Widdowson, who, when discussing the accomplishments of corpus linguistics, comments: "It seems reasonable to suppose that the limitations of linguistic description will have some bearing on their applicability to the prescriptions of pedagogic objectives for the language subject, and should cause us to call into question the assumption that prescription is necessarily determined by description which (...) has traditionally been taken as self-evident" (2003: 93).

At the same time, it has to be noted that the diverse frameworks for the description of language offer a *product* perspective on grammar as a static collection of rules that have to be adhered to at all costs. Although the validity of such a view can hardly be denied, it should be supplemented with a perspective where grammar is regarded as a dynamic *process* which enables language users to make appropriate choices and communicate their messages with greater precision and effectiveness. Related to the dynamic conception of grammar is the fact that the knowledge of grammatical structures is by no means confined to the mastery of rules and formal accuracy but should also involve the semantic and pragmatic dimensions. Only in this way can learners ever be expected to develop the ability to use grammar not only accurately

but meaningfully and appropriately as well, or engage in what Larsen-Freeman (2001a, 2003) has called *grammaring*.

An important lesson should also be drawn from the historical sketch of the changing views of on the role of formal instruction in language pedagogy and the most beneficial ways in which it can be provided. Looking at what Long (2000: 179) refers to as "drastic swings of the pendulum of fashion over the years", it becomes quite clear that outright rejection of the existing methodological positions in favor of uncritical acceptance of others which are based on the state-of-the-art theory of SLA and appear to hold out the promise of improving on current practice is often unwarranted and unproductive, a point emphasized by a number of methodologists (e.g. Brown 2001; Harmer 2001; Komorowska 2003). Thus, rather than totally dismiss certain pedagogic proposals only because they appear to be inconsistent with the latest theoretical positions and research findings, it probably makes much more sense to be wary of researchers' claims regarding the value of different instructional options and opt for *eclecticism* which will take into account the characteristics of a particular educational context and the learners we teach. On the other hand, the value of FFI research can hardly be denied as empirical investigations of this kind are directly relevant to teachers' everyday work and, apart from enhancing the quality of language pedagogy, they are likely to at least narrow the gap between the disparate social worlds of researchers and practitioners. Such a position appears to be fully justified if we consider the fact that many of the questions researchers have been asking in this area are of interest to practitioners, which is evidenced by a number of recent studies investigating the effectiveness of different types of instruction. Even though much remains to be done about the quality of FFI research, its findings seem to be invaluable for teachers who wish to assist their students in overcoming the *inert knowledge problem*, thus enabling them to use grammatical structures accurately, meaningfully and appropriately not only on discrete-point tests but in genuinely communicative situations as well.

Now that the main issues concerning form-focused instruction have been outlined, it is time to move on to a more detailed discussion of the theoretical positions and research findings concerning its role in second and foreign language pedagogy. In the following chapter, the non-interventionist models of second lan-

guage learning will be outlined, the empirical evidence in their support will be supplied and specific pedagogical proposals aiming at their implementation will be characterized.



## Chapter Two

# Non-interventionist perspectives on instructed language acquisition

## Introduction

As stated in the previous chapter, up to the mid-1960s the bulk of foreign language pedagogy employed what Stern (1992) called the *analytic strategy* which was based on the assumption that language learning proceeded in a linear fashion and thus teaching learners a collection of forms and functions sequenced according to their frequency or complexity would result in the development of target language proficiency. However, with time, such traditional approaches came in for severe criticism, which resulted from the learners' inability to deploy what they were taught in real-life communication as well as numerous research findings pointing to the existence of orders and sequences of acquisition which were impervious to FFI. Empirical findings of this kind together with Interlanguage Theory and Chomsky's Universal Grammar provided an impetus for the development of SLA theories which downplayed the role of consciously learnt grammatical knowledge, the most comprehensive and influential of which was perhaps Krashen's (1982, 1985) Monitor Model. Not less important were considerable changes in linguistic description, as reflected in the rise of functional linguistics regarding language as meaning potential (Halliday 1973), and the emergence of the concept of communicative competence, which encompassed not only the ability to form grammatically correct sentences but also the capacity to use language appropriately in social context (Hymes 1972). Such developments led a number of SLA researchers, applied linguists and educationalists (e.g. Newmark 1966; Dulay and Burt 1973; Terrell 1977; Krashen 1982; Prabhu 1987) to propose the so-called *zero option* and postulate the abandonment of grammar teaching and error correction in favor of replicating in the classroom the environmental conditions of naturalistic acquisition. It was based on the assumption that pedagogical intervention should be reduced to the minimum and that creating

opportunities for learners to engage in interactions similar to those found in untutored settings would be sufficient to promote interlanguage development. Such a position is aptly summarized by Prabhu (1987: 1) when he argues that "(...) the development of competence in a second language requires not systematization of language inputs or maximization of planned practice, but rather the creation of conditions in which learners engage in an effort to cope with communication".

The adoption of the *non-interventionist stance* by leading SLA theorists and researchers and the appearance of seminal articles and studies where communication and communicative competence were adumbrated as the objectives of L2 instruction (e.g. Paulston 1970; Rivers 1972; Savignon 1972) inevitably found its reflection in pedagogy. Thus, at least in most second language contexts, analysis started to be rejected as the most effective approach to L2 teaching and learning and gradually replaced with what Stern (1992) termed the *experiential strategy* which placed emphasis on creating in the classroom situations of real language use. This heralded the advent of what has come to be known as *deep-end* (Thornbury 2001b) or *strong* (Sheen 2005) *communicative language teaching* (CLT), which rejected or minimized the need for grammar-based syllabuses and formal instruction, placing a premium on fluency rather than accuracy. A very early implementation of such principles, albeit under a different name, can be found in the assumptions underlying the Cognitive Anti-Method of the 1960s, which exerted only a peripheral influence on pedagogy at the time, but, beyond doubt, impacted subsequent theories of classroom language learning as well as the related teaching approaches. Later, yet undeniably much more widely known and influential exemplifications of the non-interventionist stance, include early French immersion programs, Krashen and Terrell's Natural Approach or Prabhu's Communicational Teaching Project in Southern India. Although, as noted elsewhere, such pedagogical innovations mostly affected second rather than foreign language contexts, and most present-day theorists and methodologists would agree that their rejection of formal instruction was premature, their impact on language pedagogy can hardly be overestimated.

The present chapter aims to examine the origins, development and implementation of non-interventionist perspectives on classroom language learning by reviewing the relevant research findings,

theoretical positions and pedagogical proposals, and, ultimately, to appraise the value of such perspectives for present day second and foreign language pedagogy. At the very outset, some space will be devoted to a brief presentation of Chomsky's views on L1 acquisition and the empirical investigations they generated, since it is their outcomes that motivated much of the SLA research in the 1960s and 1970s. The findings of those early SLA studies which primarily focused on learner errors as well as the orders and sequences of acquisition will subsequently be discussed. This will be followed by the presentation and evaluation of the theoretical positions which provided support for the *zero option* such as the Identity Hypothesis, Interlanguage Theory, UG-Based Approaches and Krashen's Monitor Model. The chapter will close with a description of classroom implementations of the non-interventionist principles using the examples of the Cognitive Anti-Method, early immersion programs, the Natural Approach and the Communicational Teaching Project.

## 2.1. Advent of mentalism and research into first language acquisition

It appears quite fitting to begin our discussion of the diverse perspectives on second language acquisition with a description of Chomsky's account of how children go about mastering their mother tongue and the ramifications of this position. After all, it was his explanation of the miracle of first language acquisition (FLA) that for the first time shifted the emphasis from the learner-external factors to learner-internal cognitive factors, stressing the importance of the language processing operating in the learner's 'black box', and thus according him or her a much more active role in the task. As a result, Chomsky's theory provided inspiration for a number of theories of SLA, Krashen's (1982, 1985) Monitor Model being a prime example thereof. Even though it is linguistic in orientation, postulating the existence of an innate language faculty and focusing on competence rather than performance, the theory also laid foundations for a number of psychological perspectives, such as information processing models, which view language as part of general cognition and attach much more importance to how learners manage to access L2 knowledge in real time (cf. Mitchell

and Myles 1998; Spada and Lightbown 2002). Equally importantly, Chomsky's ideas inspired a flurry of research into first language acquisition, the findings of which, in turn, were instrumental in the development of the fields of second language acquisition and psycholinguistics (Schmitt and Celce-Murcia 2002). In fact, it could reasonably be argued that had it not been for research in these areas, many of the diverse positions on the role of FLA might never have been offered. Since the present section aims to set the scene for the discussion of the studies which provided support for the non-interventionist perspectives on classroom L2 learning, it will not deal with all of the above-mentioned contributions of Chomsky's theory, but, rather, focus on a brief presentation of his views on FLA and the research endeavors they instigated.

For much of the first part of the twentieth century psychology and education were dominated by behaviorist approaches, which, not surprisingly, had a profound impact on the contemporary accounts of how languages were learnt. In effect, language learning was considered to proceed in exactly the same way as any other kind of learning and to be the outcome of the process of imitation, repetition, reinforcement and habit formation, "or the creation of stimulus-response pairings which become stronger with reinforcement" (Mitchell and Myles 1998: 23-24). As Skinner, one of the leading theorists of behaviorism, explains: "We have no reason to assume (...) that verbal behavior differs in any fundamental respect from non-verbal behavior, or that any new principles must be invoked to account for it" (1957: 10). Such a position was complemented by the view that the internal processing taking place in the mind had no role to play in language learning, which was tantamount to reducing the role of the learner to that of a passive medium, shaped by the external factors operating in the environment. In fact, behaviorists saw the environment as crucial not only because it provided learners with linguistic stimuli required to create associations between the input and the objects and events this input represented, but also because it was the source of feedback on their performance. When this performance was satisfactory in the sense that learners produced output which approximated closely enough the model they had been supplied with, they received positive reinforcement and habits were formed (cf. Spada and Lightbown 2002).



It was such views that Chomsky (1959) called into question in his review of Skinner's (1957) *Verbal Behavior*, a fierce critique of the applications of the behaviorist learning theory to language acquisition. In the first place, he argued that children do not learn their L1 by simply memorizing and reproducing the words and sentences they hear. Rather, they regularly create novel utterances, many of which deviate from the standards of adult language and thus could not be heard in the surrounding environment, a point that will be dealt with in greater detail when discussing research into first language acquisition. Chomsky (1959, 1968) also pointed to the fact that children manage to learn language relatively early in their cognitive development, when much less complex tasks are beyond their grasp, and that even intellectually impaired children typically succeed in mastering their L1. Furthermore, he highlighted what came to be known as the *logical problem of language acquisition* or *Plato's problem*, which is related to the fact that, despite the complexity and abstractness of linguistic rules, children are able to master their mother tongue in such a short period of time. He was of the opinion that this success cannot be attributed merely to exposure to samples of language in the environment since input of this kind is incomplete and of too poor a quality to provide the information necessary for the construction of a full-fledged system of language. To use the words of Johnson (2001: 46), Chomsky believed that "the data the child gets from the environment (parents and other adults) are 'degenerate' in the sense that they are full of false starts, poor examples, and do not contain anything like the full information the child would need to be able to work out how the language operates".<sup>1</sup> Support for such a position came from studies which showed that parents seldom correct their children on the form of their utterances, that such corrections are usually ignored, and that errors are in fact developmental in nature and most of them eventually disappear without the need for intervention of any kind.

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<sup>1</sup> Subsequent research into *child-directed speech* (CDS) showed that it is not as incomplete and degenerate as Chomsky believed and that input of this kind can in fact facilitate acquisition (cf. Sokolov and Snow 1994). It also needs to be added that more recent studies show that although formal corrections of children's output may be uncommon, caretakers often resort to recasting, which, as will be made clear in Chapter Four, may be regarded as *implicit corrective feedback* (e.g. Farrar 1992).

In Chomsky's (1965, 1968) view, the only plausible explanation for all of these facts was that children are endowed with an innate faculty which facilitates the process of language acquisition. He referred to this faculty as a *language acquisition device* (LAD), which he described as a specialist module of the brain containing general principles underlying all languages and making it unnecessary for the child to engage in the analysis of linguistic data. In the subsequent writings of Chomsky and his followers (e.g. Cook 1994) the innate knowledge that the child brings to the task of mastering the L1 is called *Universal Grammar* and it is said to consist of *principles* and *parameters* which constrain the form the grammar of any specific language can take. While principles, such as the *principle of structure-dependency*, are said to be invariable and apply to all human languages, parameters, such as *pronoun positioning*, can possess more than one possible setting and characterize differences between languages. The existence of such constraining mechanisms considerably eases the task of acquisition since, instead of having to generalize on the basis of the input-data, which would be a daunting task given the complexity of language, children subconsciously employ their knowledge of principles and parameters to impose structure on the input data, immediately disallowing a number of possibilities and generalizing some of the already constructed areas of grammar to related features (cf. Skehan 1998). The obvious corollary of such a position was that the language input children were provided with did not in itself lead to acquisition and that its sole function was to set off internal language processing.

It is hardly surprising that such revolutionary views provided a powerful stimulus to empirical investigations of children's acquisition of their first language, which were initially undertaken to verify the claims outlined above. Research of this kind took the form of longitudinal case studies which focused on the speech produced by children over a period of months or even years (e.g. Bloom 1970; Brown 1973), cross-sectional studies investigating the output of large numbers of learners (e.g. de Villiers and de Villiers 1973), and, to a much lesser degree, experimental studies concentrating on the production and comprehension of specific features of language (e.g. Chomsky C. 1969). The bulk of such studies conducted in the 1970s aimed to establish the general patterns of L1 development and this trend continued into the 1980s and 1990s, as exemplified by the large-scale research projects conducted by Wells (1985) or Slobin

(1985b). Although, with time, cognitive, functional, interactionist and sociocultural theories inspired interest in children's acquisition of language subsystems other than grammar (e.g. Richards and Gallaway 1994; Harley 1995; Foster-Cohen 1999), the following discussion will mainly focus on the findings of the earlier studies which prompted similar investigations in the field of SLA.

One of the most consistent and important findings of early research into L1 development was that irrespective of the language they are learning, children pass through a number of similar stages before reaching adult competence, they tend to use similar structures to express similar meanings and they are likely to commit very similar errors. What is more, such a fairly well-defined pattern of development seems to be present in the acquisition of all linguistic systems (Ellis 1990, 1994; Mitchell and Myles 1998). For one thing, the regularities are evident in the types of language children use as they grow up and the mean length of the utterances (MLU) they produce. Thus, the crying which appears at birth is invariably followed by cooing and babbling and the emergence of intonation patterns, and then, at the age of one, one-word utterances used to express whole propositions. Later, at the age of 18 months, two-word utterances start to be produced, at the age of two, first word inflections appear, and, subsequently, the length of utterances is gradually extended to three and four words, and then full sentences (cf. Aitchison 1989). Naturally, there is a lot of variation, with the onset of particular stages differing from child to child, and some children even opting for the so-called *gestalt strategy*, remaining silent until they are able to produce full sentences (Peters 1977).

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1. Present progressive ('-ing')
  - 2/3. Prepositions ('in', 'on')
  4. Plural ('-s')
  5. Past irregular (e.g. 'broke')
  6. Possessive ('s')
  7. Uncontractible copula ('is', 'am', 'are')
  8. Articles ('a', 'the')
  9. Past regular ('-ed')
  10. Third person regular ('-s')
  11. Third person irregular
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Table 2.1. *Mean order of acquisition of morphemes (adapted from Gass and Selinker 2001: 98).*

Clear evidence for the existence of developmental patterns in L1 learning also comes from studies into the acquisition of different areas of grammar, the findings of which significantly contributed to the emergence of similar empirical investigations into L2 development. A particularly influential study of this kind, known as the Harvard Study, was conducted by Brown (1973), who observed that there is a consistent order in the acquisition of a number of English morphological features. He compared the development of 14 grammatical morphemes in the language produced by three children of different backgrounds and found that although the features did not always occur at exactly the same age, they were acquired in roughly the same order, depicted in Table 2.1. This ground-breaking finding was corroborated in a cross-sectional study conducted by de Villiers and de Villiers (1973). Since the order of acquisition did not correspond to the frequency with which the morphemes occurred in the speech of caretakers, numerous explanations for its existence have been advanced, including salience of some features versus others or syllabicity (Gass and Selinker 2001). It should perhaps be added that, important as they are, the findings of the morpheme studies have been called into question due to a number of methodological problems, the discussion of which, however, will be undertaken in the section dealing with second language acquisition.

Researchers also found that in addition to the existence of a fixed order of acquisition of inflectional morphemes, it is possible to identify developmental sequences in the acquisition of certain areas of syntax such as, for example, negatives and interrogatives (cf. Ellis 1994; Mitchell and Myles 1998). In the case of negation, it was observed that not only do children learning quite different languages first attempt to use it at around the same age, but also that they mark it in very similar ways by first placing the negative element somewhere outside the sentence and, then, following a number of stages in gradually moving it inside the sentence. As can be seen from Table 2.2., children also pass through developmental stages in the acquisition of question formation, where it is initially intonation or question words that are used to mark the interrogative, and only later does inversion begin to be employed for this purpose, first in 'yes/no' and later 'wh-' questions, and, once acquired, it subsequently tends to be overgeneralized to embedded questions.

Stage	Description	Examples
1	Intonation.	'Cookie?' 'Mommy?'
2	Intonation with sentence complexity.  'Yes/no' questions. Children use declarative sentence order with rising intonation. 'Wh-' questions. Question word with declarative order.	'You like this?' 'I have some?' 'Why you catch it?'
3	Beginning of inversion.  'Wh-' questions maintain declarative order.	'Can I go?' 'Is that mine?' 'Why you don't have one?'
4	Inversion.  Use of 'do' in 'yes/no' questions (but not in '-wh' questions).	'Do you like ice-cream?' 'Where I can draw them?'
5	Inversion with 'wh-' questions.  When negation needs to be included, the declarative form is maintained.	'Why can he go out?' 'Why he can't go out?'
6	Overgeneralization of inversion.	'I don't know why can't he go out.'

*Table 2.2. Stages in the development of question formation in L1 acquisition (adapted from Lightbown and Spada 2001: 7-8).*

Furthermore, such regularities not only apply to the formal aspects of the structures in question but also to the semantic functions they express, as illustrated by the fact that children first use 'no' and 'not' to describe non-presence and only gradually do they extend the use of such forms to cover rejection of an offer or suggestion, and, ultimately, to signal denial (Bloom 1970). As Clark and Clark (1977) demonstrated, similar patterns can also be noticed in the development of pragmatic and textual functions of the L1, since children first learn to perform assertions and requests, it takes some time before they develop the ability to express directives or commissives, and it is even later that they start using expressives and declarations. All of these findings point to the fact that, to quote Ellis (1994: 79), "A full account of the developmental path (...) must describe how children master the formal, functional, and semantic properties of language". At the same time, however, Ellis (1994) points out that although evidence for the existence of a well-

defined developmental pattern is overwhelming, the transition from one stage to the next is gradual in the sense that the stages overlap and at any given point in time the existing forms and functions are used alternately with the incoming ones.

Another important finding which considerably influenced interlanguage studies was that the language produced by children at any given time is rule-governed even though the rules may initially deviate from those used by adult speakers. This is clearly evident, for example, in the sequences of acquisition described above and the consistency in the use of particular forms of questions and negatives at any given stage of development. However, there is a lot of other empirical evidence that can be provided in support of such a claim. For one thing, it was found that even at the time when the majority of children's utterances consist of just two words, they are capable of consistently expressing such relationships as possession, negation and location (cf. Mitchell and Myles 1998). Additionally, children are known to produce forms such as 'sheeps' or 'mouses', which means that they not only apply rules but, in fact, tend to do so too broadly, committing overgeneralization errors. A striking example of this phenomenon is visible in the acquisition of the past tense, known as a *U-shaped pattern of development*, where the correct use of irregular verbs (e.g. 'broke') is followed by an intermediate period of incorrect use due to the application of the rule for the formation of past tense (e.g. 'brokeed'), only to reassert itself at a much later time when the exceptional nature of such verbs is recognized. Yet further support comes from an ingenious experiment by Berko (1958), in which the researcher presented children with a picture of a bird-like creature and described it with a sentence containing a nonsense noun such as 'This is a wug'. Then, when the subjects were shown a picture containing two of those creatures and told 'Now there's another one. There are two of them. There are too...?', 91% replied 'wugs', which provides very convincing proof indeed that they do not merely memorize the forms they hear, but construct rules and try to incorporate them into their own output. On top of all of this, no matter how much their productions may deviate from adult forms and to what lengths their caretakers may go to stamp out what they perceive as grammatical errors of different kinds, children typically ignore such corrections until they have reached the requisite stage of development.

As can be seen from this brief account of early FLA research, there is convincing evidence that children do not just imitate the samples of language provided by their caretakers and form habits in response to reinforcement. Rather, they use language that is rule-governed and systematic, and emerges gradually in accordance with a relatively clearly defined internal route of development. Apart from providing indisputable support for Chomsky's position, the empirical findings triggered similar investigations into the processes of L2 acquisition, which, in turn, contributed to the emergence of non-interventionist instructional approaches.<sup>2</sup> As Ellis (1994) explains, the study of the developmental patterns in L1 learning has benefited the investigations of similar regularities in second language acquisition in two important ways: "First, it has provided L2 researchers with useful methodological procedures for investigating developmental patterns in learner language. Second, L1 acquisition orders and sequences provide a baseline for considering L2 acquisition orders and sequences" (1994: 76). It is SLA research of this kind to which we now turn.

## 2.2. Empirical investigations of second language acquisition

Although, as documented by McLaughlin (1978), it would be incorrect to say that first studies of second language acquisition only appeared in the late 1960s, it was at that time that research of this kind began to flourish and eventually established itself as an independent field of enquiry. Beyond doubt, a powerful stimulus for this sudden growth of interest in the process of L2 development came from the mentalist accounts of child language development and the related rejection of the behaviorist theories of language learning upon which the L2 pedagogy of the 1950s and 1960s extensively drew. Equally influential were the findings of FLA

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<sup>2</sup> It should be noted at this point that nativist accounts of L1 learning are not universally accepted, as is evidenced in the writings of the proponents of cognitive models (e.g. Slobin 1985b) or connectionist approaches (e.g. Rumelhart and McClelland 1986). They question the claim that the brain is modular and maintain that first language acquisition is governed by the same inborn general learning mechanisms as other forms of cognitive development.

research discussed above since, quite naturally, they generated questions about L2 learning concerning the availability of LAD, the existence of similar developmental regularities, the role of learners' first language, and, on a more practical note, the feasibility of replicating in the classroom the conditions of the natural language learning experience. Yet another factor that should not be overlooked, but which is much more closely related to the practical business of teaching, was the growing disillusionment with the predictions made by Contrastive Analysis (CA), a branch of linguistics which developed in order to aid language instruction conducted in accordance with the behaviorist principles. Teachers soon discovered that, contrary to what contrastive analysts claimed, the structures which were different in two languages were not necessarily difficult, and it was at times very similar constructions that were the most problematic for learners (cf. Ellis 1990, 1994; Mitchell and Myles 1998).

The main characteristic of the early research into the nature of L2 learning is that the bulk of studies investigated learners in naturalistic or mixed settings, and attempts to examine pure classroom acquisition were few and far between. Surprising as this situation might seem considering the fact that much of this work was pedagogically motivated and conducted by teachers turned researchers, it was indeed logical to make comparisons between first and second language acquisition in similar learning conditions. Such a state of affairs can also be attributed to the fact that the vast majority of studies were carried out in second rather than foreign language contexts, where access to naturalistic learners was unproblematic and the methodological procedures of FLA research could be utilized (cf. Ellis 1990, 1994). The corollary of the focus on naturalistic language learning was that the analyses primarily dealt with *unplanned language use*, where meanings are expressed more or less spontaneously, rather than *planned language use*, where deliberate attention is paid to language forms. Thus, it is likely that the findings pointing to the existence of developmental patterns do not apply to situations, where, for example, learners consciously apply rules to translate sentences into the TL (cf. Ellis 1994, 2002a).

Keeping these important points in mind, we can now proceed to the presentation of the results of early SLA research, which led to the appearance of theories which saw little or no need for formal instruction, and their practical applications. For the sake of clarity, a



separate section will be devoted to each area of enquiry, with the discussion of the findings of Error Analysis being followed by the presentation and evaluation of the research into the characteristics of the early stages of naturalistic L2 development as well as the orders and sequences of acquisition of morphemes and syntactic structures.<sup>3</sup> Finally, some comments will be made on the early investigations of the impact of FFI on L2 developmental patterns, an issue of great relevance for the adherents of the *zero option*. Although most of the studies discussed were conducted in the 1970s, where appropriate, the results of more recent research into a particular area or more recent explanations or interpretations are also touched upon.

### 2.2.1. Explorations into learner errors

The findings of research into the speech of children acquiring their first languages as well as growing doubts about the predictive potential of CA led researchers to shift their interest away from the similarities and differences between the mother tongue and the target language to the output learners actually produced, and, in particular, the errors they committed. Such a change of focus marked the advent of *Error Analysis* (EA), which concerned itself with the systematic investigation of second language learners' errors.<sup>4</sup> Despite the fact that attempts at describing common errors had been made much earlier as exemplified by the work of French

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<sup>3</sup> It could reasonably be argued that the global method studies discussed in the previous chapter (e.g. Scherer and Wertheimer 1964; Smith 1970) are also examples of SLA research, which, in fact, focuses on classroom learning. While this is obviously true, such studies are of the input-output type and compare the effectiveness of different types of instruction rather than investigate the *processes* of acquisition, and, as such, they are not relevant to the focus of the present section.

<sup>4</sup> This disillusionment mainly concerned the strong version of the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, which claimed that errors could be predicted on the basis of *a priori* contrastive analyses of L1 and L2. There is, however, also a weak version of this hypothesis (Wardhaugh 1970), according to which CA could possess *a posteriori* explanatory power, being used to explain at least some errors in terms of the similarities and differences between the two languages. Such analyses were in fact utilized in investigations of learner errors (cf. Long and Larsen-Freeman 1991).

(1949) or Lee (1957), Ellis (1994: 48) claims that "such traditional analyses lacked both a rigorous methodology and a theoretical framework for explaining the role played by errors in the process of L2 acquisition", and that only in the 1970s did research of this kind become recognized as an independent branch of applied linguistics. It should be noted that while EA was instrumental in changing the researchers' perspective on the process of L2 acquisition and contributed to the emergence of Interlanguage Theory (see section 2.3.2. below), it was characterized by a strong pedagogic orientation. This is clearly visible in the list of reasons for the significance of learner errors, drawn up by Corder (1967), whose seminal work instigated the development of the field. While he acknowledges that erroneous L2 productions are important for researchers in supplying evidence of how languages are learnt as well as for learners in enabling them to test hypotheses about the target language, he also emphasizes their role for teachers in providing them with information about students' progress.

Beyond doubt, the most significant outcome of Error Analysis was the finding that while some errors could indeed be attributed to L1 interference, the vast majority were learner-internal in origin and indicated the workings of the processes of L2 development. Although there are considerable discrepancies in the numbers provided by researchers, most studies show that about one third of erroneous productions can be traced back to the first language while the others are clearly developmental in nature (cf. Mitchell and Myles 1998; Johnson 2001). Errors of this type, which Richards (1974) refers to as *intralingual errors*, may be the result of rule overgeneralization (e.g. 'They likes coffee'), simplification (e.g. 'She has two cat'), application of a communication strategy (e.g. 'bomb finder' used for 'metal detector'), or they can be induced by the teacher or textbook, as when an imprecise explanation is provided (e.g. 'She dances as if a professional dancer') (Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991; Brown 2000). Such findings provided compelling evidence that, similarly to L1 development, L2 acquisition was a process of rule formation which proceeded by means of hypothesis formation and testing. Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991: 58) explain how this happens in the following way:

After initial exposure to the target language (TL), learners would form hypotheses about the nature of certain TL rules. They would

then test their hypotheses by applying them to produce TL utterances. Based on the mismatch learners perceived between what they were producing and the forms/functions of the target language to which they were being exposed, learners would modify their hypotheses about the nature of the TL rules so that their utterances increasingly conformed to the target language.

Logically, the adoption of such an explanation was tantamount to abandoning the view of errors as something to be avoided and eradicated at all costs and, instead, acknowledging their importance in and of themselves. To quote Gass and Selinker (2001: 78), "(...) they [errors] are red flags; they provide evidence of a system – that is, evidence of the state of a learner's knowledge of the L2. They are not to be viewed solely as a product of imperfect learning (...) Rather, they are to be viewed as indications of a learner's attempt to figure out some system". Extremely important in this respect is Corder's (1967) distinction between *mistakes*, which are performance slips and can be self-corrected, and *errors*, which are systematic, result from the lack of familiarity with a particular rule and cannot be repaired by the learner. Viewed in this way, errors in fact comply with the rules learners operate with and it makes little sense for the teacher to react to them.

Although the contributions of Error Analysis to our understanding of the processes of L2 acquisition can hardly be overestimated, it is not without its detractors. In the first place, by focusing exclusively on erroneous utterances, researchers are missing out on the entire picture in the sense that they ignore what the learners manage to do correctly. Another problem is that learners frequently resort to avoidance of certain structures, a strategy that the analytic procedures of EA cannot account for (cf. Schachter 1974; Hulstijn and Marchena 1989). It has also been pointed out that it is not always possible to unambiguously establish sources of errors, which sometimes makes the explanations thereof rather impressionistic and discounts the possibility that the production of a deviant form may be the outcome of a combination of multiple factors. What is more, classifications of errors utilized by researchers are often subjective and unreliable, which, as mentioned above, leads to major discrepancies in the findings of different studies. Finally, most EA research is cross-sectional and little attention is given to how the errors made by learners evolve over an extended period of time, with the effect that the view of acquisition is rather

static (cf. Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991; Ellis 1994; Gass and Selinker 2001). It is such criticisms that impelled researchers to investigate learner language in its entirety, resulting in the emergence of *performance analysis* which "differed from error analysis in that it aimed to provide a description of the L2 learner's language development, and, therefore, looked not just at deviant but also at well-formed utterances" (Ellis 1990: 46), and, more recently, *form-function analysis* which studies the functions performed by specific forms at different stages of L2 development. The results of analyses of this kind are discussed in the following sections.

### 2.2.2. General characteristics of learners' early second language output

According to Ellis (1994), three important features of the early stages of L2 acquisition taking place in naturalistic settings are the existence of a *silent period*, the use of *formulaic speech* and a high incidence of *structural* and *semantic simplification*. Contrary to L1 learning, where a period of exposure without production is indispensable so that a child can recognize what language is and how it works, it is no longer mandatory in the case of second language acquisition since learners have already mastered one language system. Nonetheless, as documented in a number of studies, the silent period does occur in the linguistic development of many learners, particularly children. For example, Itoh and Hatch (1978) describe the case of a two-and-a-half year old Japanese boy who would refuse to speak English in the first three months of his stay in the United States, while Hanania and Gradman (1977) provide similar evidence about a 19-year-old Saudi woman. On the other hand, there are studies which show cases of even very young learners who choose to produce output although it is not required of them (e.g. Hatch 1978), and, quite naturally, most classroom learners are obliged to speak from the very beginning of instruction. On the basis of his review of the relevant research findings as well as his own study of 47 children learning English as an L2, Gibbons (1985) argues that the evidence for silent periods is rather weak

since they rarely exceed two weeks and their occurrence and duration vary in accordance with individual factors.<sup>5</sup>

An obviously intriguing question is how exactly the silent period can contribute to language development, but, as is the case with many other aspects of L2 acquisition, there is little agreement among researchers. While some, such as Krashen (1982), are of the opinion that the period of production-free exposure enables the learner to develop competence via listening, others believe that it is merely a period of incomprehension which does not aid acquisition in any way and may even signal psychological withdrawal (Gibbons 1985). More optimistically, it has been suggested that it provides learners with opportunities to engage in private speech which may be inaudible to caretakers or researchers (Saville-Troike 1988).

Another distinctive characteristic of the language produced by learners in the early stages of acquisition is considerable reliance on *formulaic speech*, or *prefabricated patterns*, which can be defined as expressions such as 'I don't know' or 'See you tomorrow', learnt as whole chunks without internalized knowledge of the component parts and used on particular occasions to sustain communication or to express functions not yet accessible to the learner (cf. Hakuta 1976; Ellis 1994; Brown 2000). Formulaic language of this kind is conspicuous in the output of language learners as it typically obeys the rules of TL syntax and morphology, which stands in marked contrast to creative utterances produced on the basis of the emerging interlanguage grammars and frequently representing developmental patterns. Extensive reliance on prefabricated phrases has been documented in a number of studies, some of which have already been referred to in the preceding section (e.g. Huang 1970; Ervin-Tripp 1974; Hakuta 1976; Itoh and Hatch 1978). To take one typical example, Hanania and Gradman (1977) report that Fatmah, their Saudi female subject, relied almost exclusively on what they describe as 'memorized items' at the beginning of their study, being

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<sup>5</sup> An interesting explanation for such variation is offered by Saville-Troike (1988), who suggests that it may be the outcome of differences in the learners' social and cognitive orientation. She makes a distinction between *other-directed learners*, who approach language learning as an interpersonal task and stress communication, and *inner-directed learners*, who view it as an intrapersonal task, concentrate on the language code and, thus, are more likely not to engage in production for some time.

unable to identify the elements that the items were composed of or use them in novel utterances.

A logical question to ask, once again, concerns the extent to which the use of prefabricated patterns contributes to target language development, and, yet again, there appears to be no definitive response. Krashen (1982), for example, casts doubt on the usefulness of formulas claiming that they appear in learners' speech when they are forced to speak before they are ready to do so. In addition, Krashen and Scarcella (1978) argue that formulaic expressions account for a very small proportion of the output produced by learners, they do not gradually become analyzed and they do not aid acquisition in any significant way, a view that is supported by Bohn (1986). By contrast, researchers such as Wong-Fillmore (1976), believe that formulaic speech is a precursor to creative utterances since, with time, learners manage to analyze the chunks and identify their constituent parts, and then begin to use these items in novel utterances in a rule-governed way. Another argument for the usefulness of formulaic expressions in L2 development is related to the fact that native speakers utilize a great number of such prefabricated units, or *lexical phrases* (Nattinger and DeCarrico 1992), which reduce the burden of language processing and make communication more effective. It is very likely that formulaic speech may serve a similar purpose in L2 use, particularly if we accept Skehan's (1998) assertion that in order to use the second language effectively and fluently, learners, similarly to native speakers, need to develop rules and exemplars which can be mobilized in a dual-mode system (see Chapter Three, section 3.3.8.). It also stands to reason that the use of formulaic speech enables learners to sustain communication, which results in greater exposure and more opportunities to interact, both of which are considered to foster acquisition. This argument, however, seems to be largely overlooked in the literature.

The language produced by second language learners in the initial stages of acquisition is also characterized by *structural* and *semantic simplification*, which is evident when, rather than rely on prefabricated patterns, they try to create novel utterances. As Ellis (1994: 89) explains, "Structural simplification is evident in the omission of grammatical functors such as auxiliary verbs, articles and bound morphemes like plural '-s' and past tense '-ed'. Semantic simplification involves the omission of content words – nouns,

verbs, adjectives and adverbs – which would normally occur in native-speaker speech". In fact, as shown in a number of studies (e.g. Hanania and Gradman 1977; Pienemann 1980; Ellis 1984a), utterances such as 'clean floor' (= 'Give me something for cleaning floors'), or 'eating at school' (= 'She eats meat at school') are extremely frequent in the unplanned speech generated by learners regardless of their age. The occurrence of such chunks may be reflective of the fact that learners are yet to acquire particular structures, they still progress along developmental sequences, or are unable to access specific linguistic features in spontaneous speech (cf. Ellis 1994).

### 2.2.3. Morpheme studies and orders of acquisition

The 1970s witnessed the emergence of a number of research projects which set out to investigate the order in which L2 learners acquired grammatical morphemes such as articles or different inflectional features. Studies of this kind, commonly referred to as *morpheme studies*, were inspired by the results of FLA research, and primarily the work of Brown (1973) discussed earlier in this chapter. The decision to replicate this line of inquiry appears to be quite logical if we consider the fact that from the very inception of SLA research a question of particular import was whether the processes responsible for L1 and L2 development are the same or different. While such issues were also explored by Error Analysis, in this particular case, researchers were interested in investigating well-formed utterances in learner language with an eye to obtaining empirical data that would help them determine whether, similarly to child language development, second language learning is the result of creative construction rather than habit formation. It is also hardly surprising that the vast majority of L2 morpheme studies drew upon the same methodological procedures as those used in FLA research, employing Brown's (1973) concept of *suppliance in obligatory context* (SOC) to establish the extent to which a specific feature has been acquired. This procedure involves first calculating the number of contexts in which a particular morpheme should be used, then tabulating the number of cases in which it was correctly provided and, finally, arriving at the percentage of accurate suppliance. This means that the accuracy with which a particular feature was produced was believed to correspond with the degree to which it

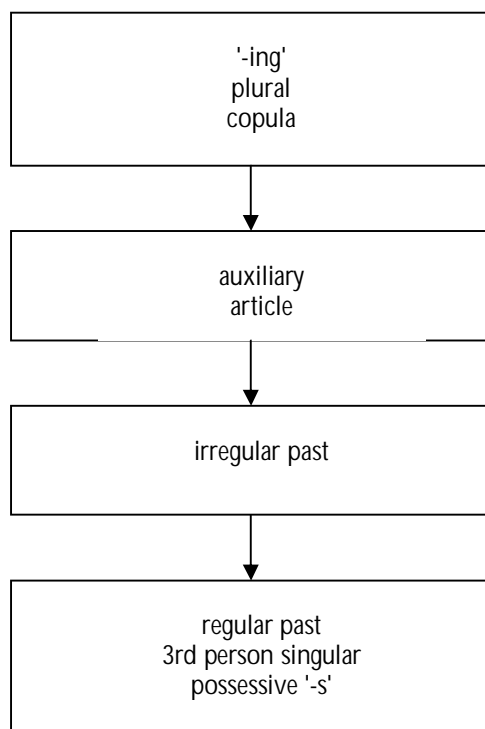
was acquired, the criterion level of suppliance, or the cutoff point for acquisition, standing at around 90 percent.

The first studies exploring the orders of acquisition of grammatical functors in second language learners were conducted by Dulay and Burt (1973, 1974), who, however, rather than focus on spontaneous speech samples as FLA researchers had done, chose to rely on elicited data. The instrument they used for that purpose, known as the Bilingual Syntax Measure (BSM), was in fact a standardized test of L2 proficiency designed for young children and consisted of seven cartoons and 33 questions intended to elicit responses on a set of English grammatical morphemes (Gass and Selinker 2001). In their first study of this kind, Dulay and Burt (1973) focused on the accuracy of production of eight of the morphemes originally investigated by Brown (1973) and examined the performance of Spanish-speaking children, aged 5 to 8, who came from three different locations in the USA and were at different levels of language ability as measured by the length of their stay in the country. Although there were differences in the accuracy with which the groups used the grammatical functors, the overall rank order was strikingly similar across the three groups and it did not match that observed for L1 acquisition. Dulay and Burt (1974) managed to corroborate this finding in a subsequent study in which they examined the speech of children of different first language backgrounds and reported very similar orders of acquisition for eleven of Brown's (1973) morphemes for both Spanish- and Chinese-speaking children, aged 6 to 8.

Once a consistent acquisition order had been identified in the case of children, the next logical question to ask was whether there also existed a fixed order among adult learners of English as a second language and, if so, whether the two were the same or different. This issue was examined in a study carried out by Bailey, Madden and Krashen (1975) who administered the BSM to a group of 73 adults, aged 17 to 55, of whom 33 were speakers of Spanish and the remaining 40 of languages other than Spanish. The researchers concentrated on eight of the functors investigated by Dulay and Burt (1974) and found that there was significant correlation between the accuracy orders for the Spanish and non-Spanish speakers, and that the overall order of acquisition was extremely similar to the child order. Since the differences in accuracy between particular morphemes were blurred and, in many



cases, different rankings would have had to be given to grammatical functors just one percentage point apart, Dulay and Burt (1975) and later Krashen (1977) suggested that they should be grouped, with the morphemes acquired at pretty much the same time constituting a separate group and marking a clear developmental stage. Figure 2.1. below presents the natural order of morpheme acquisition proposed by Krashen (1977) on the basis of his review of the relevant studies carried out at the time. No claims were made concerning the acquisition order of the elements in any particular group, but it was argued that the items higher in the order were produced more accurately and, thus, were acquired before those lower in the hierarchy.



*Figure 2.1. Proposed 'natural order' for second language acquisition (Krashen 1977: 151).*

An important extension on these early cross-sectional studies was offered by Larsen-Freeman (1976) who looked at learners with a wider range of first language backgrounds and examined acquisition

orders not only in speech production measured by means of the BSM, but also in tasks involving imitation, listening, reading and writing. While she found that the accuracy orders were not significantly affected by the learners' L1, they varied somewhat in different tasks, with the orders in tasks involving speaking or imitation deviating slightly from those requiring reading or writing. More recently, an important methodological contribution to morpheme research was made by Pica (1983), who employed scoring procedures which enabled her not only to investigate the contexts in which the occurrence of particular functors was obligatory but also cases where they were overused, and still observed the same accuracy order as in the studies reported above. There have also been several longitudinal studies (e.g. Hakuta 1976; Rosansky 1976; Schmidt 1983) which, however, found orders of acquisition considerably different from those reported in cross-sectional research. Even though such discrepancies could be explained, as Krashen (1977) does, by claiming that the accuracy levels in such studies were calculated on the basis of too few obligatory occasions, they do show that caution should be exercised when equating production accuracy of grammatical features with the order in which these features are acquired.

Quite interesting are also the results of more recent studies tracing the acquisition of individual morphemes, which show that their mastery develops gradually and systematically, with learners passing through a number of stages rather than acquiring a specific feature instantaneously. This is the case with articles (e.g. Beaumont and Gallaway 1994; Liu and Gleason 2002), pronouns (e.g. Felix and Hahn 1985; Gundel and Tarone 1992), or verbal morphology (e.g. Bardovi-Harlig 2000, 2001, 2002), to name but a few. Such findings provide convincing evidence that not only can we talk about consistent orders of acquisition in the development of morphology, but identify clear developmental sequences in the case of particular morphemes as well.

As is the case with acquisition orders in child language development, a number of different explanations have been proposed for the L2 morpheme order phenomenon, including perceptual saliency, native language influences, semantic and syntactic complexity, or functional transparency. One very logical possibility is that the major cause of the observed acquisition orders is frequency in the input learners receive, an idea first put forward

by Larsen-Freeman (1976), for which there is some empirical evidence and which has recently received renewed support from connectionist accounts of language acquisition (N. Ellis 2002; Larsen-Freeman 2002c; N. Ellis 2003). An attempt to explain morpheme orders has also been made on the basis of the Multidimensional Model, which posits the existence of speech-processing constraints that need to be gradually overcome before learners can master particular grammatical functors (Pienemann and Johnston 1987; Pienemann 1998; see Chapter Three, section 3.3.2.). Such explanations, however, have failed in their completeness and, in fact, from the very outset there has been a realization that "a single explanation seems insufficient to account for the findings" (Larsen-Freeman 1975: 419). For this reason, researchers have recently attempted to explain acquisition orders in terms of a combination of factors, as is evident in Goldschneider and DeKeyser's (2001) metaanalysis of 12 morpheme studies, which showed that "a considerable proportion of the order of acquisition of grammatical functors by ESL learners (as reflected by percentage of functors supplied correctly in obligatory contexts) can be predicted by the combination of five factors: perceptual salience, semantic complexity, morphological regularity, syntactic category, and frequency" (2001: 37).

Surely, the discussion of the L2 morpheme studies and the acquisition orders they found would be incomplete without addressing the criticisms that have been leveled against research of this kind. A fundamental question, for instance, concerns the extent to which it is warranted to equate relative accuracy of production with acquisition sequences, since, as noted in the previous chapter, such a solution ignores variability in language use and the complex nature of the processes of language development, attested to in many research projects. In addition, Long and Sato (1984) observe that the fact that learners are able to use a TL form accurately provides no evidence that they are familiar with the functions it performs. There are also doubts regarding the methodological procedures employed, with claims being made that the results obtained may be an artifact of the use of the BSM as an elicitation technique, and that scoring morphemes supplied correctly on obligatory occasions while simultaneously ignoring their misuse in other contexts offers a very incomplete picture of acquisition. Other objections are related to the fact that only a very small set of

morphemes has been examined, which precludes making any definitive claims about the existence of a natural order affecting all aspects of English grammar, let alone the grammars of other languages. Additionally, the features investigated are extremely heterogeneous and, as they possess different semantic and formal characteristics, their acquisition might pose very different tasks for the learner (cf. Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991; Ellis 1994; Gass and Selinker 2001). Last but not least, as Ellis (1997) points out, even fairly advanced learners experience considerable difficulty acquiring morphological features such as those typically investigated in morpheme studies and, in fact, some of them never succeed in attaining their complete mastery.

The criticisms mentioned above notwithstanding, the findings of the morphemes studies were extremely influential as they provided evidence that L2 acquisition was guided by internal principles which, contrary to what the proponents of Contrastive Analysis argued, remained largely unaffected by L1 influence. In fact, even today, many researchers maintain that despite their obvious shortcomings, morpheme studies provide convincing evidence for the presence of developmental orders, as is apparent in the following claim made by Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991: 92):

(...) despite admitted limitations in some areas, the morpheme studies provide strong evidence that ILs [interlanguages] exhibit common accuracy/acquisition orders. Contrary to what some critics have alleged, there are in our view too many studies conducted with sufficient methodological rigor and showing sufficiently consistent general findings for the commonalities to be ignored. As the hunter put it, 'There is something moving in the bushes'.

Not surprisingly, not all applied linguists are equally unequivocal about the value of this research. In fact, Ellis (1994: 96) comments on the above quote saying: "Such a conclusion (...) appears overly charitable, as it fails to recognize the most serious limitation in the morpheme studies – the conceptualization of acquisition in terms of (...) 'accumulated entities', i.e. the mastery of grammatical items one at a time". Right as Ellis might be in his reservations, however, it is clearly undeniable that morpheme studies showed that L2 learners followed their own *built-in* or *internal syllabus* (Corder 1967; Dakin 1973), which cast serious doubt on the usefulness of formal

instruction, and contributed to the emergence of non-interventionist perspectives on classroom language learning.

#### 2.2.4. Developmental patterns in the acquisition of syntactic structures

Since there was strong evidence that children acquiring their mother tongue pass through a number of predictable stages *en route* to the adult-like mastery of such syntactical subsystems as negatives and interrogatives, it should come as no surprise that this area soon entered the sphere of interest of SLA researchers who, as was the case with grammatical morphemes, wished to determine whether the processes of L2 development mirrored those identified for L1 acquisition. Such research typically took the form of longitudinal studies in which the speech of learners was recorded at specified intervals to be eventually transcribed and analyzed for the use of specific syntactic structures (cf. Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991). Investigations of this kind were regarded as a considerable improvement on the morpheme order studies since they enabled researchers to trace the process of language development rather than only focus on the final product, thus obtaining insights into how learners "decompose complex structural patterns and then rebuild them step by step until they finally reach targetlike mastery" (Wode et al. 1978: 176).

Even though there are researchers, such as Sharwood-Smith (1984), who are skeptical about examining developmental sequences and insist that it makes more sense to compare learner language with that used by native speakers, others argue that careful description of the system gradually constructed by the learner is valuable in and of itself. In the opinion of Bley-Vroman (1983), for instance, adopting the TL as a yardstick against which IL development is measured constitutes what he calls the *comparative fallacy* as it ignores the fact that L2 learners create a unique system of rules which should be examined in its own right if the processes of acquisition are ever to be fully understood. Such a stance is shared by Larsen-Freeman (2003), who, following Klein and Perdue (1997), refers to the learners' developing language system as a *basic variety* and argues that "Acquisition is a gradual process involving the mapping of form, meaning and use. Form-meaning-use correspondences do not simply first appear in the interlanguage in target form" (2003: 87). It is

this view that underpins descriptive research into developmental sequences, which initially focused on English negatives and interrogatives, and was subsequently extended to cover a number of other syntactic structures in English and other languages. On the whole, the findings of such studies demonstrate that, similarly to L1 acquirers, L2 learners follow sequences of development, many of these sequences are similar to those found in L1 acquisition and they are only marginally influenced by the first language background or the learning environment (cf. Ellis 1994, 1997; Lightbown and Spada 2001; Spada and Lightbown 2002).

One morphosyntactic domain where the existence of well-defined developmental stages was identified very early in the history of SLA research were English interrogatives. Studies conducted, among others, by Huang (1970), Ravem (1974), Wagner-Gough (1975), Cazden et al. (1975) and Adams (1978) revealed that English questions are an example of a *transitional structure*, the acquisition of which entails using a series of non-target forms and structures before full mastery of the construction is achieved, irrespective of learners' age or native language background. Initially, questions are realized by means of marking single words, formulas, sentence fragments or utterances with a declarative word order and rising intonation, as exemplified by 'Your house?', 'Three dogs?' or 'He work today?'. In the next stage, learners start using 'wh-' questions with no inversion and often even without auxiliary verbs, as in 'Why the Mary not here?' or 'Where the little children are?', and, then, they begin to place 'do' and, gradually, other auxiliaries at the front of the sentence, as in 'Does in this picture there is four astronauts?' or 'Is the house has six windows?'. Subsequently, inversion begins to appear in 'wh-' and 'yes/no' questions, first in those involving the use of the modal 'can' and a copula, as in 'Where is the ball?' or 'How can you say it?', and only later in those with other auxiliary verbs. At the same time, inversion is typically overgeneralized to embedded questions, as in 'Do you know where does he live?', and it takes some time before learners advance to the stage of differentiation, where they begin to distinguish between direct and indirect questions (cf. Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991; Lightbown and Spada 2001).

Stage	Description	Examples
1	External negation (i.e. 'no' or 'not' is placed at the beginning of the utterance).	'No you are playing here?'
2	Internal negation (i.e. the negator – 'no', 'not' or 'don't' is placed between the subject and the main verb).	'Marianna not coming today.' 'I don't can't sing.'
3	Negative attachment to modal verbs. At the beginning unanalyzed units such as 'don't' may be present.	'I can't play that one.' 'I won't go.'
4	Negative attachment to auxiliary verb as in target language rule.	'She didn't believe me.' 'He didn't said it.'

*Table 2.3. General stages in the sequence of acquisition in L2 English negation (adapted from Ellis 1994: 100).*

Another well-researched area of syntax the acquisition of which involves movement through a number of developmental stages are English negatives, investigated in a number of studies covering learners of such typologically different L1 backgrounds as German, Japanese, Spanish and Norwegian, representing both children, adolescents and adults (e.g. Ravem 1968; Milon 1974; Cazden et al. 1975; Gillis and Weber 1976; Wode 1976; Adams 1978). As can be seen from Table 2.3., in the first stage, learners use externally negated constructions such as 'No book' or 'No he playing here', where the negative particle 'no' or, less frequently, 'not' is added to a declarative core. In the next stage, internal negation appears as learners begin to move the negative particle inside the utterance, placing it between the subject and the main verb. As illustrated by utterances such as 'Becky not going with us', 'I no can swim', 'I don't like Los Angeles' or 'She don't like the job', at this stage 'no' is used alongside 'not' or 'don't', with the last one being a formulaic expression that has not yet been analyzed. Subsequently, the negative element 'not' starts to be added, mostly in its contracted form, first to the modal verb 'can' and the present and past forms of the verb 'be', as in 'I can't run' or 'It wasn't nice', and then its use is extended to the remaining auxiliaries, as in 'I won't go' or 'She shouldn't do it'. As was the case with 'don't' above, the appearance of such utterances should not be interpreted as indicating that the auxiliary-negative rule has been mastered, since, both the use of the contracted form and the frequency of 'can't' and 'wasn't' suggest

that, initially at least, these are unanalyzed chunks rather than the outcome of the application of rules. In the last step, learners internalize the TL rule, eliminating the use of 'no' to mark negation and consistently using 'not' as the negative particle with a whole range of auxiliary verbs, as is visible in the production of such utterances as 'He doesn't know anything', 'He couldn't come' or 'They didn't go with him'. Although the attainment of the final stage is related to the development of other aspects of verb phrase morphology, and requires the mastery of a full system of auxiliaries together with the ability to mark them for number and tense, occasional inaccuracies may still occur for a while as learners keep inflecting both the auxiliary and the main verb, as in 'He didn't said it' or 'She doesn't wants to go' (cf. Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991; Ellis 1994; Lightbown and Spada 2001). Interestingly, studies of naturalistic acquisition of L2 German (e.g. Eubank 1990) found a similar pattern in the development of negation, despite the fact that the target rules for this area of German syntax differ considerably from those operating in English.

Yet another two examples of syntactic domains where consistent orders and sequences of acquisition have been identified for learners representing a range of language backgrounds are relative clauses in English and Swedish as well as word order rules in German. As Ellis (1994) explains, the internalization of relative clauses presents learners with a formidable task as not only do they have to discover that such clauses can be used to modify noun phrases both preceding and following the main verb, but also acquire the various functions performed by relative pronouns (e.g. subject, direct object, genitive, etc.). In this connection, it has been found that learners first use relative clauses to modify the noun phrases following the verb, initially including a pronominal copy, as in 'I know the man who he coming', with relative clauses modifying the subject of the main clause appearing at a later time (Schumann 1980). In addition, research findings demonstrate that learners first omit the relative pronoun (e.g. 'I know a man has a car'), then use a personal pronoun in its place (e.g. 'I know a man he has a car'), and only later do they start employing the proper relative construction (e.g. 'I know a man who has a car'). Although there is some evidence to the contrary, it has also been observed that both in English and Swedish the first function of relative pronouns to be mastered is that of subject, followed by those of direct object, indirect object,



object of preposition, genitive, and, finally, object of comparison (cf. Schumann 1980; Hyltenstam 1984; Pavesi 1986).

With regard to the acquisition of German word order rules, the results of studies of naturalistic Spanish and Turkish learners (e.g. Clahsen 1980; Pienemann 1980; Meisel, Clahsen and Pienemann 1981; Clahsen and Muysken 1986) invariably point to the existence of a consistent pattern of development, whereby the following stages can be distinguished (Pienemann, Johnston and Brindley 1988; Ellis 1994): (1) canonical order (SVO) is used and adverbs are placed in the sentence-final position (e.g. 'die kinder spielen mit ball'), (2) adverbs are moved to the sentence-initial position but verbs are not inverted as required (e.g. 'da kinder spielen'), (3) non-finite verbal elements are moved into clause-final position (e.g. 'alle kinder muss die pause machen'), (4) inversion begins to be used in interrogatives and after sentence-initial adverbs (e.g. 'dann hat sie wieder die knocht gebracht'), and (5) finite verbs in subordinate clauses are moved to the clause-final position (e.g. 'er sagte dass er nach hause kommt'). According to Pienemann, Johnston and Brindley (1988: 222), such a pattern "is now probably one of the most robust empirical findings in SLA research because the same sequence has been found with a considerable number of further informants in studies carried out independently of each other".

Although the examples provided above constitute compelling evidence that there exist systematic and predictable stages in the acquisition of syntactic domains in English and other languages, it would be erroneous to assume that such stages are discrete and that all learners pass through them with the same ease and use identical approximations to TL constructions. In the first place, there is considerable overlap between the stages of acquisition in any developmental sequence, which is reflected in the fact that in addition to producing utterances typical of a particular stage, learners also use forms representative of earlier and later stages, which Larsen-Freeman (2003) calls *trailing patterns* and *scouting patterns*, respectively. Consequently, the attainment of a particular stage is verified on the basis of the analysis of the frequency of the various forms used by the learner, and in order to qualify as a separate phase of IL development, each potential stage has to be ordered with respect to other stages in a sequence and cannot be skipped. The following comment by Lightbown and Spada (2001:

85) nicely summarizes the nature of learners' movement through developmental sequences:

(...) developmental stages are not like closed rooms. Learners do not leave one behind when they enter another. In examining a language sample from an individual learner, one should not expect to find all and only examples of behavior from one stage. On the contrary, at a given point in time, learners may use sentences typical of several different stages. It is perhaps better to think of a stage as being characterized by the emergence and increasing frequency of a particular form rather than the disappearance of an earlier one. Even when a more advanced stage comes to dominate in a learner's speech, conditions of stress and complexity in a communicative interaction can cause the learner to 'slip back' to an earlier stage.

In addition to this lack of linearity in traversing developmental sequences, the rate at which the advancement from one stage to the next takes place, the kinds of L2 patterns employed at a particular point of development, and the scope of application of the rule being acquired can all be influenced in subtle ways by the learners' L1 background, although the sequence itself apparently cannot be altered (Zobl 1980; Wode 1981; Zobl 1982; Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991; Lightbown and Spada 2001; Spada and Lightbown 2002). For one thing, when learners reach a developmental level where the predominant IL patterns resemble those employed by their mother tongue, they may take longer to attain a subsequent stage, as is the case with speakers of languages with pre-verbal negation such as Spanish or Polish, who tend to linger longer at Stages 1 and 2 in the acquisition of English negatives (see Table 2.3.) than speakers of languages with post-verbal negation such as Swedish or Japanese. It has also been found that the convergence of L1 and developmental structures can result in the addition of a substage which does not occur in the speech produced by learners whose L1s diverge from a particular interlanguage pattern. Thus, on reaching a stage in the acquisition of English negation where the negative marker is placed after the auxiliary, German learners may create a substage where post-verbal negation is used with lexical verbs, as in 'He goes not to school'. In the same vein, in the acquisition of English interrogatives, such learners are likely to go through a period of inverting the subject and lexical verbs, as in

'Went he to school?'. Yet another example of the interaction between the learners' L1 and developmental patterns, this time caused by incongruence between the two, is the fact that French learners of English who reach the advanced stage of subject-auxiliary inversion in their acquisition of interrogatives tend to accept it with pronoun subjects but reject it with noun subjects, as dictated by the mother tongue rules for question formation (Spada and Lightbown 1999). To make matters even more complex, it can reasonably be assumed that even in the case of learners coming from the same L1 background, the ease and nature of movement through developmental stages can vary as a function of individual learner differences such as language aptitude or cognitive styles, although this issue appears to have been neglected by researchers and, thus, it has hardly been touched upon in the literature.

Finally, it has to be noted that few attempts have been made to account for the existence of developmental patterns in the acquisition of syntax, with most of the explanations offered lacking specificity and appealing to rather general 'internal learner contributions' (cf. Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991). In fact, even more specific theoretical proposals, such as the Multidimensional Model (Pienemann and Johnston 1987; Pienemann 1998) which sets out to explain why learners pass through developmental stages and makes predictions about the acquisition of grammatical features that have not yet been investigated, are based on empirical findings confined to relatively few structures in just a handful of languages (see Chapter Three, section 3.3.2.). In addition, as Ellis (1994) argues, research into developmental sequences suffers from a number of limitations such as its chief preoccupation with grammar at the expense of other language subsystems, the lack of a general index of L2 acquisition or the well-attested occurrence of variability.<sup>6</sup> Equally disconcerting are serious methodological problems which are related to the fact that many studies are carried out in a way that virtually precludes replication, single data collection instruments are employed, research procedures are inappropriate for the

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<sup>6</sup> This is not to say, of course, that there has been no research into developmental sequences in other language subsystems, the work done in the fields of lexis and phonology being a good example of such investigations. However, perhaps under the influence of UG-based theories, the bulk of interlanguage studies have focused on investigating grammatical features (cf. Ellis 1994; McDonough 2002).

subjects in some cases, and frequently only anecdotal evidence is quoted in support of the claims made. Despite such reservations and the fact that the concept of developmental stages is somewhat idealized, investigations into the acquisition of various aspects of syntax provide the strongest evidence for the existence of predictable patterns and regularities in L2 learning. As VanPatten (1998: 107) points out, "(...) the systematicity and universality of these stages are evidence of the constraints on language acquisition. No feature or structure can simply pop into the mind of the learner; the learner must in effect (re)create the linguistic property based on the linguistic input provided".

#### 2.2.5. The impact of formal instruction on the orders and sequences of acquisition

Beyond doubt, the very existence of consistent orders and sequences of acquisition as well as the fact that the developmental patterns identified by researchers frequently closely resembled those found in L1 acquisition greatly contributed to the emergence of non-interventionist perspectives on classroom language learning. However, once such regularities had been discovered, logic dictated that the next step should involve determining the actual effect of pedagogical intervention on the apparently immutable patterns of development. To use the words of Ellis (1994: 627), "It is of both theoretical interest to SLA researchers, and of practical importance for language pedagogy, to ask whether formal instruction can 'subvert' the natural order and whether it can enable the learner to acquire target language constructions immediately and so avoid transitional constructions". As noted in Chapter One, research endeavors investigating such questions mainly followed the confirmatory tradition, taking the form of comparative and experimental studies. By and large, the findings of such research clearly demonstrate that FFI is powerless to alter acquisition orders and sequences, its effects can only be trivial and temporary, and, in some cases, it can even inhibit the learning process (cf. Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991; Ellis 1994, 1997, 2001b; Spada and Lightbown 2002).

Early research into the impact of formal instruction on developmental patterns compared morpheme accuracy orders displayed by classroom and naturalistic learners, and its outcomes

provided substantial evidence for their inviolability regardless of the context of instruction. Fathman (1978), for example, found statistically significant correlations between the morpheme orders of German secondary school learners of English as a foreign language and adolescent acquirers staying in the US. Similar results were reported by Makino (1980), who compared the morpheme difficulty orders manifested by Japanese secondary school EFL students with those of naturalistic learners, and Pica (1983), who found significant correlations between the accuracy orders in free conversation of 18 native speakers of Spanish, six of whom received classroom instruction, six acquired English naturally and the remaining six had the benefit of both conditions. Such findings were corroborated in studies conducted by Perkins and Larsen-Freeman (1975) and Turner (1979) that investigated the effect of FFI *per se*. While the former found that two months of intensive ESL instruction did little to alter the accuracy orders spontaneously produced by 12 Spanish-speaking university students, the latter showed that the morpheme orders displayed by three 18-year-old Spanish learners enrolled in an English intensive program did not correlate with the order of instruction. Some counterevidence is also available, however, as is evidenced in the work of Lightbown (1983) who did find several discrepancies between instructed and natural accuracy orders.

The somewhat conflicting findings reported above as well as the numerous limitations of morpheme studies discussed earlier in this chapter all indicate that it would be imprudent to use them as a sole basis for claiming that formal instruction has no effect on the orders and sequences of acquisition. However, the same line of enquiry was pursued by researchers in other areas of grammar and the conclusions they reached are almost identical. Pavesi (1986), for instance, found the same order of acquisition of relative pronouns in high school students learning English in Italy and a group of waiters acquiring the language in Scotland. As far as the sequences of acquisition are concerned, Ellis (1984a) carried out a nine-month longitudinal study of the communicative classroom language produced by three Punjabi and Portuguese ESL learners and found that the developmental stages for interrogatives and negatives were almost the same as those identified for naturalistic learners. Felix and Hahn (1985), in turn, failed to observe differences in the acquisition of pronouns by secondary school learners of German who were provided with explanation and practice, and those

learning it in naturalistic settings. Perhaps the most convincing evidence that developmental sequences are immutable comes from research on word order rules in German. In what is probably the best known study in this area, Pienemann (1984) examined the spontaneous speech of 10 Italian children and demonstrated that two weeks of instruction in subject-verb inversion in German proved to be successful only for the subjects who had reached the immediately preceding developmental stage but not for those who had been at an earlier stage. The inviolability of the word order sequence was subsequently confirmed by Pienemann (1989) in his longitudinal studies of university students in Australia as well as Ellis (1989) in his investigation of adult students of L2 German in British institutions of higher education.

The opponents of FFI also point out that not only is it powerless to disrupt the natural route of development but in some cases it can even exert a deleterious effect on the process of acquisition by delaying the learner's passage through developmental stages or even inducing regressive behavior. For example, in a frequently cited study by Lightbown (1983), intensive practice directed at the verbal inflection '-ing' early in grade six of Canadian grade school resulted in French-speaking students 'overlearning' the feature which was then used accurately or overgeneralized to other contexts throughout the school year. However, following the introduction of the uninflected present simple and imperative verb forms in grade 7, there was a decline in the suppliance of the morpheme and the learners reverted to using incorrect utterances such as 'He take the cake', which are the hallmark of early stages of uninstructed learning. This led Lightbown (1983: 239) to speculate that "By forcing learners to repeat and overlearn forms which have no associated meaning to contrast them with any other form(s), we may be setting up barriers which have to be broken down before the learners can begin to build up their own interlanguage systems".

On a similar track, Eubank (1987) reported that tutored adult learners of L2 German tended to place the negator in the sentence final position, a phenomenon that has not been observed in naturalistic acquisition and may be due to the application of an operating strategy (i.e. preserve the basic word order) in order to tackle the demands of instruction. A more detrimental effect of FFI was reported by Pienemann (1984), who found that teaching learners a German word order rule that was a few stages ahead of

their current level can lead to regression to the previous stage of development. Weinert (1987) and VanPatten (1990a), in turn, reported that instruction can hamper the acquisition of L2 German negatives and L2 Spanish clitic pronouns, respectively. The findings of yet another study by Pienemann (1987) suggest that intervention targeting features that learners are not ready to acquire is likely to bring about avoidance behavior. In this case, classroom learners of L2 German who were taught the present perfect, tended to avoid this late-acquired structure, and opted instead for constructions composed of modals and infinitives.

Although the evidence for the failure of instruction to alter L2 developmental patterns seems to be overwhelming, there are still some important caveats that need to be considered. For one thing, the very notion of orders and sequences of acquisition remains controversial and the research investigating the effect of FFI is limited not only in a relatively small number of relevant studies but also in their choice of grammatical structures and the types of pedagogic intervention employed. A study by Buczkowska and Weist (1991) also suggests that although teaching is powerless to affect acquisition sequences in the case of production, such constraints do not operate when it comes to comprehension. In a somewhat similar vein, Ellis (1994, 1997, 2002a) has repeatedly argued that developmental constraints only apply to implicit knowledge and, therefore, grammar teaching aimed at the development of conscious rule knowledge may be effective regardless of whether learners have reached a required stage. In addition, Sheen (2004) points out that there is at best only scant empirical support for the claim that the passage through developmental sequences will eventually result in the accurate production of grammatical features in the absence of instruction.

Moreover, it has to be kept in mind that unable as formal instruction may be to alter acquisition orders and sequences, it can lead to greater accuracy, the presence of errors indicative of language development, as well as more rapid movement through the stages, as evidenced in many of the studies quoted above (e.g. Perkins and Larsen-Freeman 1975; Pavesi 1986; Ellis 1989). Recent research has also cast some doubt on the immutability of acquisition sequences, as demonstrated by Spada and Lightbown (1999), who found that instruction in English interrogatives was effective irrespective of the subjects' developmental stage. Finally, the results

of *projection studies* (e.g. Gass 1982) show that instruction directed at typologically less frequent forms triggers the acquisition of more frequent ones, and Pienemann (1984) himself concedes that some features (i.e. variational) are amenable to pedagogic intervention. For the sake of clarity, however, these and other facilitative effects of FFI will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

### 2.3. Theoretical justifications for non-interventionist positions

It is only fitting that the discussion of the empirical investigations the outcomes of which largely confirmed the existence of relatively fixed developmental patterns in L2 acquisition be followed by the presentation of the theories and hypotheses that provide support for non-interventionist perspectives in language teaching. This is because, illuminating as the research findings discussed above undoubtedly are, it is rather unlikely that they would have influenced second and foreign language pedagogy to the extent they did, had it not been for the theoretical positions that were developed on their basis and subsequently served as a starting point for making specific recommendations for classroom practice. The theoretical models that will be the focus of the present section include the Identity Hypothesis, postulating that the processes of L1 and L2 acquisition are in essence identical, Interlanguage Theory, which emphasizes that learner language is a constantly evolving system rather than a distorted version of the target language, UG-Based Approaches, where an attempt is made to apply nativist theories to L2 acquisition, and, finally, Krashen's Monitor Model, which claims that it is subconscious acquisition that is responsible for language development. In each case, the tenets of a particular theory or hypothesis will be expounded, its contributions to language pedagogy will be considered, and its limitations and weaknesses will be examined.

The author is fully aware that discussing the four positions under the same heading and ordering them in this way is somewhat arbitrary and could even be viewed as controversial, as they differ in scope and application, some of them were themselves the impetus for further research while others were not, and, most importantly, they were proposed at different times and are not equally valid



today. There is little doubt, for example, that whereas the Identity Hypothesis in its original form is no longer tenable and there is virtually no research comparing L1 and L2 acquisition, UG-Based accounts are constantly being updated and constitute a vigorous field of enquiry.<sup>7</sup> What all of the positions have in common, however, is that they draw to a greater or lesser degree upon the research findings discussed in the previous section and have continued to be invoked as justification for abandoning formal instruction and error correction in favor of replicating in the classroom the conditions for naturalistic acquisition.

### 2.3.1. The Identity Hypothesis

The results of the early investigations of learner errors, the characteristics of the initial stages of L2 acquisition, and the persistence of developmental orders and sequences showed that there were many parallels between first and second language learning. After all, it was discovered that, similarly to children developing their native language ability, L2 learners mostly commit intralingual errors reflecting the processes of hypothesis formation and testing rather than mother tongue influence, many of them go through a silent period, use formulaic expressions and employ structural and semantic simplifications, and, most significantly, the language they produce is constrained by the orders and sequences of acquisition which appear to be impervious to instruction. It is such findings together with the assumption that nativist models can be applied to learning second languages that led some theorists and researchers (e.g. Newmark 1966) to put forward the *L1 = L2 Hypothesis*, also known as the *Identity Hypothesis*, according to which the principles underlying the processes of first and second language acquisition are essentially the same (cf. Ellis 1994). This position can be exemplified by the following quote from Ervin-Tripp (1974:

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<sup>7</sup> Obviously, such statements always have to be qualified as what is considered to be perfectly rational by some researchers is dismissed out of hand by others. In this case, the proponents of the so-called *no transfer/full access* position in UG-Based Approaches (e.g. Flynn 1996) would probably support the Identity Hypothesis to some extent, but this position itself is in turn rejected by other UG researchers (e.g. White 1991) or those favoring psycholinguistic accounts of acquisition (e.g. Pienemann 1998).

126), one of the researchers who first undertook the complex task of comparing the language produced by L1 and L2 acquirers:

(...) We found that the functions of early sentences, and their form, their semantic redundancy, their reliance on ease of short term memory, their overgeneralization of lexical forms, their use of simple order strategies all were similar to processes we have seen in first language acquisition. In broad outlines, then, the conclusion is tenable that first and second language learning is similar in natural situations (...)

There can be little doubt that a stance of this kind had far-reaching implications both for the theoretical explanations of second language acquisition and for language pedagogy. As far as SLA theory is concerned, positing that L1 and L2 learning are similar, if not identical, processes was tantamount to questioning the existence of a critical period for acquisition and adopting the position that second language development is based on a language-specific system rather than general problem-solving mechanisms (see section 2.3.3. for an elaboration of this point). Much was also at stake in the case of language teaching, since embracing the Identity Hypothesis, as Newmark (1966) did, meant postulating that teachers should stop interfering with the learning process by teaching grammar and instead focus their attention on creating in the classroom conditions typical of naturalistic discourse as the only reasonable way of fostering acquisition. Such implications for classroom practice were the inevitable corollary of the theoretical position adopted and they were in fact supported by Corder (1981: 77) when he said: "Efficient language teaching must work with, rather than against, natural processes, facilitate and expedite rather than impede learning (...) What has been discovered so far suggests that the nearer we can approximate language teaching to learning of a second language in an informal setting the more successful we shall be".

Although the Identity Hypothesis has exerted considerable influence on pedagogy and its impact is still evident in popular teaching approaches, most researchers would probably agree that it is no longer plausible, at least not in its original formulation. If we closely examine the findings of interlanguage studies discussed earlier in this chapter, it becomes clear that the similarities between first and second language learning can easily be overstated and that

discernible differences between the two processes can also be pinpointed. When it comes to the early stages of acquisition, for example, many L2 learners, particularly adults, do not pass through a silent period, they rely on unanalyzed chunks to a greater extent than L1 learners, their utterances are longer and propositionally more complex, and, as Felix (1981) observed in the case of German, they use less varied sentence types than children acquiring their native language. There are also differences in the morpheme acquisition orders in the two types of acquisition, with articles, copula and the auxiliary verb 'be' being acquired earlier and irregular past tense later by L2 learners (Ellis 1994).

The strongest similarities can be found in the orders and sequences of acquisition of syntactic structures such as negatives and interrogatives, although even here some discrepancies obtain, as reflected in the fact that, depending on their mother tongue, L2 learners can take longer to pass from one stage or another or even add a substage to a particular developmental pattern (see section 2.2.4. above). It should also be remembered that first and second language acquisition diverge in many other respects such as L2 learners' knowledge of at least one language, their cognitive maturity, metalinguistic awareness and world knowledge, as well as those listed in Table 2.4. Prompted by the presence of such discrepancies, Bley-Vroman (1988, 1989) proposed the *Fundamental Difference Hypothesis* which posits that child L1 language acquisition is distinct from adult L2 language learning. A note of caution about making too much of the existence of some incontrovertible parallels between native and second language acquisition is also sounded by Larsen-Freeman, who comments: "While there may be characteristics common to all language acquisition, it is not hard to make a case for a fundamental difference (...) between, on the one hand, first language (L1)/early second language (L2)/bilingual acquisition and, on the other, older learner/adult L2 acquisition" (2003: 76).

The point made by Larsen-Freeman (2003) appears to be crucial and it is shared by Brown (2000) who argues that it only makes sense to draw analogies between L1 and L2 acquisition if at least some of the variables are held constant for the groups being compared. In fact, it is rather uncontroversial that the similarities and differences between the two processes are more or less pronounced depending on such characteristics of the learners as

Feature	L1 acquisition	L2 (foreign language) acquisition
Overall success	Children normally achieve perfect mastery of their L1.	Adult L2 learners are very unlikely to achieve perfect mastery.
General failure	Success is guaranteed.	Complete success is very rare.
Variation	There is little variation among L1 learners with regard to overall success or the path they follow.	L2 learners vary in both their degree of success and the path they follow.
Goals	The goal is target language competence.	L2 learners may be content with less than target language competence and may also be more concerned with fluency than accuracy.
Fossilization	Fossilization is unknown in child language development.	L2 learners often cease to develop and also backslide (i.e. return to earlier stages of development).
Intuitions	Children develop clear intuitions regarding what is correct and incorrect sentence.	L2 learners are often unable to form clear grammaticality judgments.
Instruction	Children do not need formal lessons to learn their L1.	There is a wide belief that instruction helps L2 learners.
Negative evidence	Children's 'errors' are not typically corrected; correction not necessary for acquisition.	Correction generally viewed as helpful and, by some, as necessary.
Affective factors	Success is not influenced by personality, motivation, attitudes, etc.	Affective factors play a major role in determining proficiency.

*Table 2.4. Differences between L1 and L2 acquisition (adapted from Ellis 1994: 107, based on Bley-Vroman 1988).*

their age and native language background, as well as the learning context, which involves, among other things, the amount and quality of exposure (i.e. foreign vs. second language settings) and the availability of instruction (i.e. naturalistic vs. instructed acquisition). For example, there is a general consensus that naturalistic second language acquisition by children is akin to first language acquisition, and many scholars would agree that the mechanisms behind both processes are identical even if their nature remains a source of

contention. It could also be argued that untutored adult learning in second language contexts, where the input is unstructured and the primary focus is on meaning, also shares many characteristics with mother tongue acquisition, although, even here, mature learners' access to a superior memory capacity and previously learned languages may be the source of considerable differences. The greatest disparity between the two types of acquisition can obviously be found in the case of foreign language contexts, where non-native teachers frequently provide younger and older learners with an imperfect version of the target language and the amount of in- and out-of-class exposure is sometimes severely limited.

In view of the inconclusive empirical evidence and the complexity involved in making comparisons between L1 and L2 acquisition, the Identity Hypothesis as formulated at the beginning of this section is clearly untenable, which is not to say that a weaker version could not be supported. As Ellis (1994: 109) writes, "The evidence (...) suggests that the hypothesis is partially supported. Given the immense cognitive and affective differences between very young children and adults, the similarities in the language they produce are striking. However, there are also significant differences that have been shown to exist (...)". One example of a recently proposed intermediate, albeit still controversial, position is the *Fundamental Similarity Hypothesis* (VanPatten 2004), according to which child first language acquisition and adult second language learning are similar in the sense that they are input-dependent, they demonstrate a poverty of stimulus, and internal grammar is impervious to explicit instruction and error correction, but which also acknowledges many of the differences discussed above. Regardless of the pronouncements of theorists and researchers, and their warnings to exercise restraint over uncritically applying research findings, the belief that classroom learning should be a copy of naturalistic acquisition greatly contributed to the advent of the natural and early communicative approaches discussed later in this chapter.

### 2.3.2. Interlanguage Theory

A theoretical position that is closely related to the Identity Hypothesis is Interlanguage Theory which was both informed by the findings of the early SLA research and provided itself a powerful

impetus for further investigations of this kind. It reflected the widespread belief that, similarly to the language created by children acquiring their L1, the second language knowledge constructed by learners out of the linguistic input to which they were exposed was a rule-governed system rather than a hit-or-miss approximation of the target language. Brown (2000: 215) describes this change of heart among theorists and researchers as follows:

(...) learners were looked on not as producers of malformed, imperfect language replete with mistakes but as intelligent and creative beings proceeding through logical, systematic stages of acquisition, creatively acting upon their linguistic environment as they encountered its forms and functions in meaningful contexts. By a gradual process of trial and error and hypothesis testing, learners slowly and tediously succeed in establishing closer and closer approximations to the system used by native speakers of the language.

Although a number of different terms have been offered to describe the interim system which learners build as they develop their TL competence, such as *transitional competence* (Corder 1967), *approximative system* (Nemser 1971) or *idiosyncratic dialect* (Corder 1971), it is the term *interlanguage*, coined by Selinker (1972), which finally entered the common parlance. As Ellis (1994) explains, the concept can be used both to refer to the language system that a learner operates at a given point in time, in which case it is preceded by an indefinite article (*an interlanguage*), and to label the series of interconnected systems representing his or her progression over a period of time, and in such a situation it takes the form of an uncountable noun (*interlanguage*) or the term *interlanguage continuum* is used. The emergence of Interlanguage Theory was an important development as it constituted the first major attempt to account for the process of L2 acquisition and, as such, it laid foundations for a number of subsequent SLA theories such as Krashen's Monitor Model. Not surprisingly, the theory has also constantly evolved in response to new research findings, it has been extended to cover pragmatics and phonology, and has been subject to diverse cognitive and linguistic interpretations (e.g. N. Ellis 2003; O'Grady 2003; White 2003). However, since the main aim here is to demonstrate the ways in which it spurred the development of teaching proposals postulating a focus on communication rather than the TL code, the

subsequent discussion will largely be confined to the central cognitive premises of early Interlanguage Theory.

Once it was accepted that learner language was systematic and dynamic, two key questions that needed to be addressed concerned determining the processes responsible for interlanguage construction as well as the nature of the interlanguage continuum. Early explanations centered around a number of cognitive processes and learning strategies responsible for acquisition, including language transfer, overgeneralization or simplification (Selinker 1972), but, more generally, it has been assumed that the main driving force behind IL development is the process of *hypothesis formation and testing*. According to this view, as learners are exposed to linguistic data in the input, they form tentative hypotheses about how the target language operates and on this basis create *hypothetical grammars* which are then tested in reception and production. If the available input can be successfully interpreted, it provides learners with further supporting evidence and their contributions do not impede communication or trigger corrective reactions from the interlocutors, a particular hypothesis is confirmed and its mental representation reinforced. Conversely, when the incoming data are contradictory or incomprehensible and learners' own utterances fail to attain intended communicative goals or are corrected, the existing hypothesis can be amended and the interim system restructured. Obviously, different aspects of interim grammar are likely to develop according to their own schedule and the restructuring taking place does not affect the language system in its entirety. Nonetheless, at any given time this system underlies performance in the same way as native-speaker grammars and, thus, even though learners' productions can be considered as incorrect when compared with the native-speaker norm, they are grammatical when judged in terms of the rules learners operate with.

As far as the nature of the interlanguage continuum is concerned, the mental grammars constructed by learners are in a state of flux as they are constantly permeated by new forms and rules which are derived internally through L1 transfer or overgeneralization of an existing rule, or come from exposure to TL input and are thus external in origin. This means that at any particular stage the IL continuum is made up of a series of overlapping grammars, each of which contains a number of competing rules representing elements of the previously created grammar as well as

newly formed or revised hypotheses. Predictably, at any one stage of development, such heterogeneous competence is reflected in learner performance in the form of systematic variability, as when a particular structure is used correctly in some situations and erroneously in others (Ellis 1990, 1994). Viewed in this way, L2 acquisition involves gradual complexification, with successive internal grammars being more sophisticated than their predecessors, and a question arises as to what constitutes the starting point in this process, which in itself has proved to be a highly controversial issue. While some researchers (e.g. Selinker 1972; Taylor 1975) suggested that the initial state is, to some extent at least, the learner's L1, thus supporting the *restructuring continuum view*, Corder (1977) proposed that it is the same basic system as in L1 acquisition, opting in effect for the *recreating continuum view*. At present, a somewhat more reasonable intermediate position is adopted, with most researchers subscribing to the opinion that "This system is composed of numerous elements, not the least of which are elements from the NL and the TL. There are also elements in the IL that do not have their origin in either the NL or the TL" (Gass and Selinker 2001: 12).

Finally, it should be pointed out that irrespective of the exact starting point of the interlanguage continuum and the nature of the processes responsible for its gradual development, learners typically fail to achieve full-fledged L2 competence. This phenomenon has been referred to as *fossilization*, or "the process by which non-target forms become fixed in interlanguage" (Ellis 1994: 353). Research shows that even though learners are capable of temporarily eliminating fossilized forms, a phenomenon called *backsliding* is very common, whereby such forms resurface in spontaneous language use.

Although Interlanguage Theory did not break much new ground in the sense that many of its premises mirrored the predictions about L2 development based on L1 acquisition theory and the research it generated, its impact on language teaching was extremely profound. Since the assumption that learner language is a legitimate system gradually developing in the direction of the target language paralleled the claims of the Identity Hypothesis, the only logical conclusion could be that classroom learning would only be enhanced if it bore as much resemblance as possible to naturalistic L2 acquisition. The inevitable corollary of such a conviction was the



advancement of specific pedagogical proposals which centered around remedial procedures, error treatment and the organization of the syllabus (cf. Ellis 1990).

In the first place, it was suggested that teachers should carefully analyze the errors committed by learners with the purpose of establishing their place on the IL continuum, pinpointing the ways in which their output deviated from the native-speaker norm and engaging in re-teaching the problem areas. Obviously, in order to conduct effective remedial work, the teacher needed to be provided with sound advice on how to effectively treat learner errors which, it should be remembered, were believed to indicate that learners were actively engaged in testing out hypotheses about the TL, and thus regarded as part and parcel of the process of acquisition. Whereas some scholars expressed the opinion that inaccuracies in learner output should be ignored, a more widespread view was that error treatment should be selective and vary depending on the nature of the incorrect form (e.g. errors should be handled differently from mistakes, the focus should be on errors affecting comprehensibility, etc.).

The most radical proposals, however, were advanced with regard to the organization of the syllabus, since it made little sense to externally select, order and sequence the teaching content if it was accepted that learners followed their own, internally-derived blueprint for approximating TL competence. One way of making the internal and external syllabus compatible would be teaching in accordance with the developmental sequences identified by research (e.g. Bailey, Madden and Krashen 1974), an idea rejected at the time on grounds that it would actually entail teaching erroneous forms only to be reintroduced over a decade later in the form of the Teachability Hypothesis (Pienemann 1985). An alternative solution was that teachers should limit pedagogic intervention to creating conditions for meaningful interaction and shy away from grammar teaching. As Ellis (1990: 56) argues, this approach was motivated by the belief that "When provided with opportunities for communication, the learner would not only learn how to communicate but, in the process, would also acquire the knowledge of the linguistic system". Not only was such a proposal more feasible and practicable, but it exerted a huge impact on pedagogy, serving as a catalyst for the emergence of such teaching innovations as the

Natural Approach, immersion programs or the Communicational Teaching Project.

### 2.3.3. UG-Based Approaches

While the Universal Grammar (UG) model has been widely accepted as a plausible, although not the only one, explanation of native language acquisition by children, its usefulness in accounting for second language learning has been far more controversial. The adherents of UG-Based Approaches tend to argue that the *logical problem of first language acquisition*, or the *poverty of stimulus argument*, which provided one of the justifications for refuting behaviorist accounts applies in equal measure to L2 acquisition (cf. Cook 1988). This is because learners' knowledge of the target language far exceeds what they could have acquired from the input alone and, therefore, they must continue to fall back upon the same language specific-module which helped them create the system of their L1. Accepting such a line of reasoning, however, would be tantamount to admitting that there is no critical period and ignoring all of the numerous differences between child mother tongue acquisition and adult second language learning. As mentioned in the discussion of the Identity Hypothesis, it is such factors that prompted Bley-Vroman (1988, 1989) to propose the Fundamental Difference Hypothesis which claims that L2 learners no longer have access to UG and, therefore, they have to draw upon their L1 knowledge and general problem-solving ability. For him and other like-minded scholars then, the logical problem of foreign language acquisition involves explaining why some learners are relatively successful while others are not or, perhaps, why L2 competence is qualitatively different from L1 competence (cf. Schachter 1988).

Once such reservations are brushed aside and the UG-perspective is in fact adopted, an additional complication arises as its proponents differ widely in their views on the extent to which UG-derived language universals in the form of principles and parameters are available in second language learning. Since the adoption of any of these positions entails a different explanation of how L2 knowledge develops and brings with it potentially important implications for pedagogy, it appears warranted to briefly present them here. According to Ellis (1994) and Mitchell and Myles (1998: 61-62), four

logical possibilities can be distinguished concerning the role of Universal Grammar in L2 learning.<sup>8</sup>

1. *No access view* – this position is in line with the Fundamental Difference Hypothesis; UG atrophies with age and is no longer available in L2 acquisition, with the effect that learners have to resort to general problem-solving strategies; as a result, the learning process can be accounted for by some of the cognitive theories discussed in Chapter Three of the present work (cf. Meisel 1997).
2. *Full access view* – in this approach UG is believed to be directly accessible in L2 acquisition, which means that this process is essentially identical with native language acquisition, with any observable differences resulting from the cognitive maturity and needs of L2 learners; the L1 is assumed to play a role in the sense that, where L1 and L2 parameter settings are the same, acquisition is facilitated and where they differ, the learning burden increases as new values have to be assigned (cf. Flynn 1996).
3. *Indirect/partial access view* – it is hypothesized here that although learners still have access to the principles of UG, which prevents them from constructing 'wild' or 'rouge' grammars and producing 'impossible errors' (Gregg 2001), the full range of parametric variation is no longer available; this could mean that UG is only accessed indirectly through the L1 with parameter values being permanently fixed for this language; alternatively, some parametric options could be available while others could not, independently of the L1 settings (cf. Schachter 1996; Hawkins and Chan 1997).
4. *Dual access view* – according to this position, adult learners have continued access to UG, but they can also rely on a general problem-solving module, with the two systems being in constant competition; although the problem-solving skills are inadequate for processing complex structures, adults are unable to bypass them, which interferes with the language-

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<sup>8</sup> A much more extensive model of the availability of UG in L2 acquisition can be found in White (2000), who discusses it in terms of transfer and access.

specific module and leads to failure in attaining full TL competence (cf. Felix 1985).<sup>9</sup>

In order to fully appreciate the implications of the four positions for language teaching, it is necessary to discuss them in terms of the role they attribute to positive and negative evidence in the process of acquisition (see Chapter One, section 1.1.). Obviously, adopting the *no access view* and ascribing the main role to general problem-solving abilities justifies the provision of different types of negative evidence, but then a cognitive rather than linguistic account of L2 acquisition is necessary and we are no longer dealing with a UG-based approach. Conversely, if the *full access hypothesis* is embraced and learners only need to interact directly with primary data in order to activate innate language-specific mechanisms, negative evidence is basically redundant. As Skehan (1998: 78) aptly comments, in such a situation "it might be as irrelevant for teachers to instruct learners formally and in a rule-focused way as it would be for mothers to work doggedly through a language syllabus with their children". Paradoxically, such a stance appears to apply in equal measure to the *dual-access view* since, although in this case learners draw upon both language universals and the problem-solving system, the latter is viewed as ineffective and, therefore, constitutes a stumbling block to successful acquisition. As far as the *indirect* or *partial access* positions are concerned, some theorists and researchers committed to the UG framework (e.g. White 1991) see a role for negative evidence in helping learners reset the parameters that differ in the L1 and the L2 (e.g. adverb placement in English and French), as such grammatical properties would be lost if only positive evidence were to be provided. Even such a modest proposal for the facilitative effect of FFI, however, is rejected by UG-oriented scholars such as Schwartz (1993) or Towell and Hawkins (1994) who argue that although conscientious learners may apply what they have been taught in immediate production, negative evidence does not contribute to the L2 system of knowledge and any observable effects wear off after a certain time. All of this clearly demonstrates

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<sup>9</sup> This view is sometimes referred to as the *Competition Model* (Felix 1985), but it has to be clearly differentiated from the theoretical position advanced by Bates and MacWhinney (1982). Although their theory bears the same name, it provides a psycholinguistic account of acquisition and has been developed to explain how input is noticed and interpreted by language users.

that in approaches to L2 acquisition drawing upon Universal Grammar, instruction is either entirely unnecessary or its contribution is marginal. To quote Doughty and Williams (1998c: 201), "If a UG-based explanation were to prevail, regardless of whether a role for explicit and negative evidence in SLA is rejected or accepted, then teachers would simply have to wait for the results of linguistic research to determine precisely what resides in UG and do their best to provide triggering data in their classes".

Obviously, it would be imprudent to reject UG-based approaches only because they largely deny the contribution of explicit pedagogical intervention, particularly if they were shown to successfully account for the process of acquisition in terms of linguistic factors. In fact, one undeniable strength of this theory is that it constitutes a sophisticated tool which has made it possible for researchers to propose specific hypotheses concerning linguistic properties that can be verified in empirical work, a characteristic that is rather infrequent in the case of cognitive theories. Apart from being a reliable tool for linguistic description, this approach has also succeeded in providing plausible explanations for the existence of developmental stages and the role of crosslinguistic influence, which might indicate that at least some aspects of L2 acquisition are dependent on purely formal language properties (cf. Ellis 1994; Mitchell and Myles 1998).

However, the UG model also suffers from a number of weaknesses, not the least of which being the fact that many researchers question the existence of an innate language faculty or at least doubt its availability after the critical period. In addition, despite recent attempts to extend the theory to phonology, morphology and the lexicon (e.g. Radford 1997), it still primarily concerns itself with syntax, thus failing to fully account for the acquisition of the totality of what is generally understood as L2 grammar. A related problem is that the UG-approach is confined to investigating and explaining only the formal underlying competence and entirely ignores the issue of how learners acquire the skill of using this abstract grammatical knowledge in communication and how the learning process is mediated by social and psychological variables. There are also methodological weaknesses such as the reliance on grammaticality judgment tests to tap learners' intuitions, a paucity of longitudinal studies as well as the fact that, in order to investigate the issue of access, it would be necessary to examine

learners who started learning the L2 after the critical period (cf. Ellis 1994; Mitchell and Miles 1998). Finally, as Skehan (1998) observes, the theory is constantly being amended, which, on the one hand, is clearly commendable as a sign that the field can adapt to fresh empirical findings, but, on the other, those who wish to apply UG-derived insights to related areas surely feel frustrated if the version of the theory they have embraced is suddenly reformulated or abandoned altogether.

Whatever the strengths and weaknesses of UG-based models and their value for explaining the processes of L2 acquisition, it cannot be denied that they have played an important part in the emergence of methods and approaches stressing the primacy of meaning-focused instruction and some methodologists still look up to them for theoretical justifications of non-interventionist pedagogic proposals. After all, as Cook (1991:119) indicated, "As the Universal Grammar in the student's mind is so powerful, there is comparatively little for the teacher to do". The theory of UG has also contributed to the rise of such approaches in the sense that, similarly to Interlanguage Theory, it provided a set of assumptions that Krashen drew upon when developing his Monitor Model to which we now turn our attention.

#### 2.3.4. Krashen's Monitor Model

The Monitor Model, also known as the Monitor Theory, was first described by Krashen in a series of articles in the 1970s (e.g. Krashen 1977, 1978), and was initially a model of second language performance aiming to reconcile the findings of the morpheme order studies with differential outcomes of various kinds of tasks. The initial proposals were subsequently subject to a number of modifications, and having been refined and expanded in a series of books published in the early 1980s (Krashen 1981a, 1982, 1985), they crystallized into one of the most comprehensive and coherent theories of second language acquisition offered to date. As mentioned on several occasions throughout this chapter, the Monitor Model was firmly grounded in SLA research and developed in reaction to the results of interlanguage studies which provided evidence that L2 acquisition is constrained by the operation of developmental orders and sequences. As for its theoretical underpinnings, it drew upon the main assumptions of the positions dealt

with earlier in the present section, namely the Identity Hypothesis, Interlanguage Theory and the early UG approach. Consequently, similarly to such proposals, it provided yet another justification for the claim that languages can be acquired incidentally or implicitly from sufficient exposure to TL data without the need for grammar instruction and error correction. Somewhat in contrast to the earlier proposals, however, Krashen's theory caught on very quickly and not only did it greatly influence the directions of SLA research but was also immensely popular among practitioners and has had a tremendous impact on second language teaching. Thus, it surely merits a somewhat more extensive treatment here. In what follows, the fundamental principles underlying the Monitor Model will first be presented together with their relevance for language pedagogy, then the limitations of the theory will be discussed, and, finally, some comments on its current status will be made.

Although at a certain point the theory was made up of as many as ten hypotheses (e.g. Krashen 1981b), this number was eventually reduced to five basic claims which are currently taken to constitute the Monitor Model. These include: the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis, the Monitor Hypothesis, the Natural Order Hypothesis, the Comprehensible Input Hypothesis, and the Affective Filter Hypothesis, the main tenets of which are summarized below:

### *1. Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis*

According to this proposal, which exemplifies a *dual representation view* of the mental representation of L2 knowledge (cf. Doughty and Williams 1998c), there are two distinct ways in which adults can develop second language ability, which are referred to as *acquisition* and *learning*. Whereas the former is hypothesized to be a subconscious and intuitive process similar in all important respects to the way in which children pick up their mother tongue, and involves a focus on meaningful communication, the latter is believed to be a conscious process, in which learners direct their attention to language forms and rules, as is the case with explicit grammar teaching and error correction in the classroom.<sup>10</sup> To use the words of Krashen (2003: 1) from his recent publication:

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<sup>10</sup> Perhaps one of the first scholars who saw the need to emphasize that L2 learning can take place both subconsciously and consciously was Palmer

Language *acquisition* [emphasis original] is a subconscious process; while it is happening, we are not aware that it is happening. Also, once we have acquired something, we are not usually aware that we possess any new knowledge; the knowledge is stored in our brains subconsciously (...) both children and adults can subconsciously acquire language (...) In non-technical language, acquisition is sometimes referred to as 'picking up language'. When someone says 'I was in France for a while and I picked up some French', it means he or she acquired some French. Language *learning* [emphasis original] is what we did in school. It is a conscious process; when we are learning, we know we are learning. Also, learned knowledge is represented consciously in the brain. In non-technical language, when we talk about 'rules' and 'grammar', we are usually talking about learning.

Although the distinction between acquisition and learning was proposed earlier by Wilkins (1974) to differentiate between naturalistic and classroom learning, such a contrast is not crucial in Krashen's (1982, 1985) more far-reaching formulation, which places primary emphasis on the *difference* between communicating messages and consciously attending to language forms. In fact, acquisition might as well occur in language lessons where meaning-focused instruction is provided, and learning often takes place outside the classroom, as when learners reach for a dictionary or grammar textbook, consciously practice their pronunciation, or ask people around them to explain some intricate rule. What is also of paramount importance, Krashen (1981a) argues that there is no cross-over between the two processes, which essentially means that there is no mechanism for converting learnt knowledge into acquired knowledge, a proposal that has come to be known as the *non-interface position* or the *zero option*.

## 2. Monitor Hypothesis

This hypothesis has been proposed to account for the roles performed by the acquired and learned systems in L2 performance.

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(1922), who distinguished between *spontaneous* (implicit) and *studial* (explicit) capacities. While the former concerned getting to know the L2 through interaction with native speakers and can be equated with Krashen's *acquisition*, the latter involved the study of grammar as well as the use of books and dictionaries, and are thus comparable to *learning*.



According to Krashen, it is acquired knowledge that initiates speech, ensures fluency and enables intuitive judgments about correctness whereas learned knowledge only acts as a *monitor* or *editor* which is employed to alter the output of the acquired system before or after a particular utterance is actually written or spoken. However, even this modest function of conscious knowledge is further restricted because its contribution to accuracy is relatively small. As Krashen (2003: 2) points out, "acquisition is responsible for both fluency and most of our accuracy". The main reason for this is that in order for the Monitor to be successfully used learners must know the rule needed, be focused on the form of their contribution, and have sufficient time. Needless to say, it is very difficult, if not impossible, for all these three conditions to be satisfied under the pressures of spontaneous communication, which does not allow frequent application of the Monitor and renders it rather weak. In addition, heavy reliance on monitoring can be counterproductive, as is evidenced in the distinction between *optimal Monitor users*, who draw upon the learned system in a way that does not impede communication, *Monitor underusers*, who do not care much about errors and give primacy to speed and fluency, and, finally, *Monitor overusers*, who are concerned with rules to such a degree that "speech is slow and painful to produce as well as to listen to" (Krashen 2003: 3).

### *3. Natural Order Hypothesis*

This proposal was initially based on the findings of research into morpheme accuracy orders and later received additional support from interlanguage studies which provided evidence for the existence of developmental sequences in the acquisition of certain areas of syntax (see 2.2.4. above). Krashen (1985: 1) claims that "we acquire the rules of language in a predictable order, some rules tending to come early and others late. The order does not appear to be determined solely by formal simplicity and there is evidence that it is independent of the order in which rules are taught in language lessons". It logically follows that the natural order is the outcome of the operation of the acquired system, it does not correspond to the norms of complexity as they are commonly understood, it is immune to deliberate pedagogic intervention, and it does not reflect the order in which structures should be taught in the language classroom (Krashen 2003: 2).

#### 4. *Comprehensible Input Hypothesis*

In the opinion of Krashen, this hypothesis, which he calls elsewhere the *Fundamental Learning Principle* (Krashen 1981b) or the *Comprehension Hypothesis* (Krashen 1998, 2003), is the cornerstone of the Monitor Model as it explains how acquisition takes place, or how learners progress along the developmental continuum postulated by the Natural Order Hypothesis. He argues that learners can only acquire language when they are provided with *comprehensible input*, defined as samples of the second language which contain structures just beyond their current level of competence. Input of this kind can come in both spoken and written form, and it is typically represented as  $i + 1$ , where  $i$  indicates the current state of knowledge and  $+ 1$  stands for the next developmental stage. It is claimed that only processing and understanding such bits of language activates the innate structure that underlies L1 acquisition (LAD), thus enabling learners to move from one stage to another along the natural order and, as such, being indispensable to successful acquisition. At the same time, the input which is beyond the grasp of the learners (e.g.  $i + 4$ ) or such that contains only the structures they already know (e.g.  $i$  but also  $i - 1$ ) does not foster it. As for the process of comprehension itself, Krashen argues that "we are able to do this with the help of our previously acquired linguistic competence, as well as our extra-linguistic knowledge, which includes our knowledge of the world and our knowledge of the situation. In other words, we use context" (2003: 4). Stressing the primacy of comprehension over production entails downplaying the role of interaction, as is evident in the following comment: "Speaking is the result of acquisition, not its cause. Speech cannot be taught directly, but 'emerges' on its own as a result of building competence via comprehensible input" (Krashen 1985: 2). It is also emphasized that if sufficient quantities of *comprehensible* or *roughly tuned input* are provided, *structured* or *finely tuned input* containing exemplars of specific grammatical features is redundant.

#### 5. *Affective Filter Hypothesis*

Since it is common knowledge that not all learners are equally successful in language learning, this final component of the Monitor Model is intended to account for the role of affective factors such as attitude, motivation, self-esteem or anxiety in the process of acquisition. Krashen (2003: 6) believes that these variables "do not

impact acquisition directly, but prevent input from reaching (...) the 'language acquisition device', or the part of the brain responsible for language acquisition". He explains this in terms of the so-called *Affective Filter*, which is capable of blocking the input and keeping it out, thus controlling the rate and ultimate success of acquisition. Thus, learners with positive attitudes will not only seek more comprehensible input but will also have lower or weaker filters, which will make them more open to it and facilitate acquisition. By contrast, learners with little self-esteem and motivation will be reluctant to obtain input, and, even when they do, the high or strong filters will render successful acquisition impossible.

The theoretical proposals advanced by Krashen have had important pedagogical implications and they have greatly contributed to the advent of communicative approaches to language instruction, all of which embody what Stern (1992) labeled *the experiential strategy*. First of all, the assumption that consciously learned language knowledge plays only a very minor role in producing output and that it cannot be transferred to the acquired system casts doubt on the usefulness of grammar teaching and correcting learner errors. Even though Krashen admits that "error correction helps learning" (2003: 1) and that "some conscious knowledge of language can be helpful" (2003: 3), he immediately goes on to add that such pedagogic intervention should only be directed at the "small residue of grammar, punctuation, and spelling rules that even native speakers fail to acquire, even after intensive aural and written comprehensible input" (2003: 30), with the 'lie/lay' or 'its/it's' distinctions being good examples of such features. If the value of FFI should indeed be so restricted, it truly makes much more sense to dedicate the oftentimes scarce classroom time to acquisition-based activities rather than ineffective rule explanations or structure-based exercises. After all, a language teacher could ponder, why bother with the tricky past tense and past participle forms anyway when native speakers themselves cannot use them properly?

Logically, once the decision has been taken to all but reject grammar teaching, a syllabus based on a careful selection and grading of grammatical structures would also have to be done away with and supplanted with one designed around communicative activities and topics reflecting learners' needs, as only in this way could we expect learners to move along the natural order. In addition, since

the Monitor Model is a prime example of a *reception-based theory* where production is believed to be secondary to comprehension and emerge only when the learner is ready, it gives justification for teaching approaches in which the development of interactive skills necessarily takes a back seat (cf. Celce-Murcia 2001b). Finally, lessons have to be conducted in such a way that the affective filter is low and the danger of affective factors getting in the way of acquisition is minimized, an old idea in a new guise considering the fact that it was one of the main assumptions of the humanistic approaches of the 1970s. On the whole, the Monitor Theory gives credence to the reinvention and expansion of the pedagogic principles embraced by the Cognitive Anti-Method, as exemplified by Krashen and Terrell's (1983) Natural Approach that will be discussed later in this chapter.

Influential as the Monitor Model might have been in shaping research agendas, furthering our understanding of the processes underpinning acquisition and informing second and foreign language pedagogy, it suffers from numerous limitations. In fact, the sheer number of criticisms leveled at the theory in its entirety as well as its constitutive hypotheses has been so great that it is beyond the scope of this work to list all of them, let alone provide an in-depth treatment and evaluation thereof. Thus, we will mainly focus here on issues concerning the proposed model of linguistic knowledge representation and access as well as the account of the acquisition process, as they provide a useful point of reference for the discussion of the theoretical justifications of FFI that will be undertaken in Chapter Three.

In the first place, there are numerous objections to the dual representation position the theory adopts as well as the claim that there is no interface between acquisition and learning. McLaughlin (1990a: 627), for example, expresses strong reservations about the dichotomy between subconscious and conscious processes, as is evident in the following quote:

My own bias (...) is to avoid use of the terms conscious and unconscious in second language theory. I believe that these terms are too laden with surplus meaning and too difficult to define empirically to be useful theoretically. Hence, my critique of Krashen's distinction between learning and acquisition – a distinction that assumes that it is possible to differentiate what is conscious from what is unconscious.

Although other researchers have accepted the distinction between implicit and explicit knowledge, alternative models thereof have been proposed such as Bialystok's (1994) claim that implicit knowledge is confined to innate linguistic knowledge. Yet another proposal of this kind is Carr and Curran's (1994) *multiple representation model* which suggests that irrespective of whether instances of a linguistic feature are subjected to implicit or explicit processing, they are stored as implicit knowledge (i.e. exemplar-based), which can later be converted into explicit knowledge (i.e. rule-based) through the processes of cognitive comparison or abstraction.

Naturally, adopting such a stance is tantamount to rejecting the non-interface position, which has also come in for widespread criticism from other scholars. One of them is Gregg (1984: 82), who argues that it is counterintuitive to claim that learning cannot become acquisition since, "If unconscious knowledge is capable of being brought to consciousness, and if conscious knowledge is capable of becoming unconscious – and this seems to be a reasonable assumption – then there is no reason whatever to accept Krashen's claim, in the absence of evidence". Similarly, Gass and Selinker (2001) believe that a proposal that nothing learned formally can be employed in fluent, unconscious speech is illogical and would imply that information about the same linguistic feature is located in two separate systems, which would make the human brain a rather ineffective structure. There are also problems with the claim that the learned system is only used to edit the output produced by learners. According to Gass and Selinker (2001), this would mean that learners instructed primarily through the medium of their L1, which no doubt reflects the realities of some classrooms, should be unable to comprehend the TL or to produce their own utterances, as no subconscious acquisition can occur in such settings.

Lastly, the Natural Order Hypothesis, which has to complement the first two if Krashen's argumentation is to remain cogent, is mostly based on the findings of the morpheme studies which, as shown in section 2.2.3., are in many respects inconclusive and fraught with methodological problems. Although it is indisputable that there are developmental patterns in L2 acquisition, the empirical evidence is limited to relatively few structures in a handful of languages, with language transfer and individual variation also having been shown to play a part. All things considered, Krashen's claim that FFI is of little value has to be regarded with circumspec-

tion, particularly in view of the theoretical and empirical evidence presented in the following chapters of this work.

There are also many doubts concerning the assumption that "comprehensible input is the only causative variable in second language acquisition" (Krashen 1985: 62). To start with, attaching most importance to input quantity and minimizing as it does the role of the learner, this position has been contested by applied linguists such as van Lier (1996), who argues that it is the quality of exposure that makes it usable for acquisition, and that learners need to be cognitively, emotionally and physically engaged for samples of language to be converted into intake. Additionally, as Færch and Kasper (1986) point out, it is necessary to differentiate between intake fostering comprehension and intake contributing to learning, since, in their view, it is difficult to see how understanding input can result in the acquisition of grammatical morphemes (e.g. past tense '-ed') which are redundant for successful message comprehension. Besides, for acquisition to take place, learners would have to rely to a large extent on *bottom-up processing* in listening, which, however, is mostly viewed as primarily a *top-down process* in which learners mainly depend on semantic and pragmatic information rather than the syntactic structure (cf. Swain 1995). In fact, as suggested by Long (1996) and Swain (1995), it is negotiated interaction that can draw learners' attention to the gaps in their interlanguages and push them to modify their output, thus fostering acquisition (see Chapter Three, section 3.3.6.). It could also be argued that language samples containing too easy or too advanced features can benefit acquisition by, for example, reinforcing form-meaning-use relationships or providing access to new lexis or pronunciation patterns, respectively. Finally, from a strictly pedagogical point of view, the question arises as to how the teacher can provide input one step ahead of the learner level in a class of students with diverse levels of L2 knowledge, a situation which is a rule rather than an exception in most educational contexts.

Despite such a barrage of criticism as well as a multitude of new developments in SLA theory and research which have further dented the fundamental tenets of his theory, Krashen appears to have remained steadfast in his claims. As he says in the introduction to his recently published book, "These hypotheses have not only survived well over the years but have also proven to be useful in other areas of language education. So far research results remain

consistent with these hypotheses and there is no counterevidence. According to the rules of science, this is all one can demand of a hypothesis" (2003: vii). He has also continued to conduct research projects intended to provide support for his theoretical proposals, which have mostly focused on comparing the effectiveness of comprehensible-input approaches such as different reading programs with what he refers to as traditional teaching (e.g. Mason and Krashen 1997; Rodrigo, Krashen and Gribbons 2004). Although such studies smack of the somewhat discredited method-comparison research, typically only scant details are provided concerning what traditional teaching involves, and no attempt is made to assess the value of grammar teaching complemented with meaning-focused instruction, their seemingly favorable findings are used to buttress the original theory. Not surprisingly, Krashen's ideas continue to resonate with a number of applied linguists working within the UG framework who do not shy away from offering pedagogical recommendations, even though the research they conduct is far removed from the concerns of practitioners (e.g. Schwartz 1998; Young-Scholten 1999). Last but not least, the basic assumptions of the theory are still appealing to many teachers and students as they provide a plausible explanation for the fact that classroom learners who receive years of formal instruction fail to develop communicative ability in the TL. After all, who would disagree that there should be more acquisition and less learning in traditional language classes, that it is essential to have as much exposure to the L2 as possible, and that we should comprehend the language we read or hear if we are to acquire it. Given such sentiments, it should come as no surprise that the Monitor Model has given a powerful impetus to the advent of approaches implementing the experiential strategy and has retained its status as the main plank of what Brumfit (1979) refers to as *fluency-first pedagogy*.

## 2.4. Classroom implementations of the non-interventionist stance

Before we conclude our discussion of non-interventionist perspectives on language pedagogy, it appears fitting to provide a brief outline of the most influential classroom applications of the *zero*

*option*, according to which L2 instruction can only be successful if it is entirely meaning-focused. In other words, the present section will be concerned with the methods and approaches which foster experiential language learning, most of which have emerged in response to the empirical findings and the related theoretical positions presented throughout this chapter. To quote Stern (1992: 313), "the main point about experience as a teaching strategy is that we attempt to create conditions in the language class in which the language is not examined, analyzed or practiced as an object but is used for a purpose in as realistic a manner as possible". Obviously, there are a number of candidates that could be said to fit such a description more or less accurately, and, for reasons of space, conciseness and clarity, it would be neither feasible nor necessary to characterize all of them here. Therefore, the focus will exclusively be on those pedagogic solutions which, on the one hand, strictly adhere to the principles of non-intervention in their choice of syllabus types and teaching procedures, and mark significant milestones in second and foreign pedagogy, on the other.

Adopting such stringent criteria entails excluding Asher's (1977) Total Physical Response, which may be comprehension-based, but relies on a syllabus constructed according to grammatical and lexical criteria, and its impact beyond elementary levels has been limited. The same fate befalls functional-notional syllabuses which may have contributed to the rise of communicative methodology, but, in specifying linguistic content, they are representative of a synthetic approach (Wilkins 1976) and constitute what Breen (1983) has called a *syllabus of ends* rather than a *syllabus of means*. It also means leaving out the communicative approach and task-based instruction (TBI), as, in both cases, recent formulations allow or even encourage a certain amount of attention to the language code and certain types of FFI (Johnson 2001; Savignon 2001). Finally, we do not include here intensive ESL programs in Quebec (e.g. Lightbown and Spada 1990) and listening/reading programs in New Brunswick (e.g. Lightbown 1992), since, although they undoubtedly implement the experiential strategy, they are largely locally-conducted small-scale Canadian experiments. In effect, the discussion will be confined to the Cognitive Anti-Method, early immersion programs, the Natural Approach and the Communicational Teaching Project, which are, to all intents and purposes, truly acquisition-based. In what follows, these methods and approaches are briefly described and evaluated,



with their inadequacies in fostering L2 development only being hinted at owing to the fact that they will be considered in more detail in Chapter Three.

#### 2.4.1. Cognitive Anti-Method

Paradoxical as it may seem, similarly to the Cognitive Code Method which was based on the assumption that the perception and awareness of rules precedes their actual application in language use (cf. Chastain 1971), the Cognitive Anti-Method originated in direct opposition to audiolingual learning theory and drew upon Chomsky's ideas as well as the findings of early research into first and second language acquisition. This view of classroom language learning, also known as the Minimal Language Teaching Program, was propagated in a series of articles published in the 1960s, and was based on the assumption that teachers should adopt a *minimal strategy* and stop interfering with the learning process, thus allowing the biologically endowed language faculty to do its job (cf. Newmark 1963, 1966; Newmark and Reibel 1968). In other words, it was believed that if teachers recreated in the classroom the conditions of native language acquisition, L2 learning would take place automatically and effortlessly as it does in naturalistic settings. The main assumptions underlying the Cognitive Anti-Method can be summarized in the following way (Ellis 1990: 35-37):

1. It is the learner rather than the teacher that controls second language learning – according to this fundamental principle, the learner is viewed as a problem solver who actively participates in the learning process and immensely contributes to it.
2. Human beings are endowed with an innate capacity for language learning – this means that L2 learners have continued access to the language acquisition device used by children, and, thus, classroom learning should be modeled on first language acquisition.
3. Second language acquisition does not benefit from attention to linguistic form – this indicates that grammar teaching is pointless since, in the words of Newmark (1963: 217), "Systematic attention to grammatical form of utterances is neither a necessary condition nor a sufficient one for successful language learning".

4. Classroom language learning is not an additive process – according to this assumption, the selection and ordering of the input makes little sense since linguistic features are acquired in whole chunks rather than learnt incrementally.
5. Errors are inevitable as they are an integral part of the learning process – such a view is reminiscent of the implications of Interlanguage Theory and holds that teachers should not insist that learners produce only correct utterances since this ability will naturally develop in its own time, as it does in native language acquisition (cf. Jakobovits 1970).
6. L1 interference reflects learner ignorance – this principle has come to be known as the *Ignorance Hypothesis* (Ellis 1994) which posits that learners fall back upon old knowledge to fill in the gaps in their TL system; in the view of Newmark and Reibel (1968), the solution was not consciously practicing the point of difference, which only aggravated the problem, but, rather, the provision of more instances of language in use.

As this overview makes plain, the Cognitive Anti-Method constituted an early implementation of the experiential strategy in its rejection of the preselection and grading of teaching content as well as the renouncement of explicit pedagogic intervention. As such, the proposal was far ahead of its time, and being so radical and innovative, it exerted only a marginal impact on the language teaching profession, still mostly clinging tenaciously to the audiolingual principles. However, its tenets laid the foundations for the development of Krashen's Monitor Model as well as non-interventionist instructional approaches such as those described below.

#### 2.4.2. Immersion programs

Immersion programs are representative of *content-based instruction* which integrates language teaching aims with the learning of specific subject-matter content. As Brown (2001: 234) explains, "The overall structure of a content-based curriculum, in contrast to many traditional language curricula, is dictated more by the nature of the subject matter than by language forms and sequences. The second language, then, is simply the medium to convey informational

content of interest and relevance to the learners". Although there exist many models of content-centered teaching such as content-enriched foreign language programs in elementary schools, theme-based teaching as exemplified by English for Academic Purposes (EAP) and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses, sheltered courses at the elementary school, secondary school and university level (e.g. ESL Social studies) or adjunct programs where students concurrently attend language and content classes (e.g. UCLA Freshman Summer Program), *immersion education*, or *bilingual education* as it is sometimes called, is perhaps a prototypical program of this kind (cf. Snow 2001).

Such programs were first established at the kindergarten level in St. Lambert, a suburb of Montreal, Canada in 1965 in response to the dismal failure of English-speaking children to learn French in regular school classes, and, since they were counted a great success, they paved the way for a large number of similar programs across the country. With time, the Canadian innovation was adopted by other countries and the model is currently used for a variety of purposes across diverse social, cultural and political contexts. Apart from being employed in foreign language settings to aid students in attaining higher levels of TL proficiency, such programs continue to be used to teach majority language students in a minority language (e.g. American students learning Spanish in Culver City, California), to support heritage language (e.g. Basque language immersion programs in the Basque region of Spain) and to revive languages on the brink of extinction (e.g. indigenous language programs in Hawaii) (Walker 2000).

Despite the fact that all immersion programs are designed with the purpose of enabling learners to experience the language in real communication, many different variants have been developed. Thus, there is *total immersion*, where almost all academic instruction is provided through the medium of the target language, and *partial immersion*, in which only some subjects are taught in this way. A distinction can also be drawn between *early immersion programs*, which begin as early as in kindergarten or grade 1, *middle or delayed programs*, where instruction in the second language typically starts in grade 4 of elementary school, and *late immersion*, which is introduced at the end of elementary school or the beginning of secondary school (cf. Ellis 1994; Snow 2001). Obviously, different combinations of the onset and amount of TL instruction are also possible (e.g. early

partial immersion). In addition to the educational level at which immersion is introduced and its extent, Swain and Johnson (1997) list eight other variable features of immersion programs such as the ratio of L1 and L2 at different stages within the program, continuity across levels within the educational system, bridging support that students receive at initial stages, resources, the commitment of the parties involved (i.e. students, teachers, school authorities, etc.), attitudes towards target language culture, the social status of the target language in particular contexts, and the definition of success in a program (e.g. academic achievement vs. advancement in terms of TL proficiency). Despite such differences, however, all immersion models share eight core features which set them apart from other second language programs and these include:

- instruction is provided through the medium of the L2;
- the immersion curriculum parallels the local L1 curriculum;
- overt support for the mother tongue is provided;
- the aim of instruction is additive bilingualism;
- L2 exposure is mostly restricted to the classroom;
- students enrolled in the program represent comparable proficiency levels;
- the teachers are bilingual;
- L1 rather than L2 culture is reflected in the classroom.

Although such features should be viewed as a continuum, all of them have to be present for a program to be representative of the immersion model (cf. Walker 2000).

In general, immersion programs, which Krashen views as language teaching *par excellence*, have proved to be extremely successful, as attested in numerous research projects. Not only do immersion students acquire normal L1 proficiency and reach the same levels in academic achievement and literacy skills as their counterparts attending regular L1 programs, but they have also been shown to far surpass learners receiving traditional L2 instruction and to develop near-native communicative proficiency in the TL (cf. Swain 1985; Genesee 1987; Day and Shapson 1991). On the face of it, then, it would appear that Krashen is right in his claims that sufficient amounts of comprehensible input are all that is needed to successfully acquire a second language and that this can happen without the benefit of direct instruction.

However, as mentioned in Chapter One, it has also been found that while immersion learners attain native-like levels of target language ability when it comes to receptive skills as well as discourse and strategic competence, their productive skills leave much to be desired, and they continue to make persistent grammatical errors, even after many years of instruction (e.g. Harley and Swain 1984; Hammerly 1987; Swain 1992, 1998). Since these issues will be discussed in considerable detail in the following chapter, suffice it to say at this point that such findings have led many applied linguists to believe that if the effectiveness of this kind of teaching is to be enhanced, it should be complemented with a certain amount of form-focused instruction. This assumption has been confirmed empirically and there is a consensus at present that "(...) the improvement of immersion students' oral and written grammatical skills can be achieved through curricular intervention that integrates formal, analytic with functional, communicative approaches to language teaching" (Day and Shapson 2001: 76). Immersion educators and curricular designers have heeded such advice and the programs currently feature some elements of formal instruction as an addition to subject-matter content.

#### 2.4.3. Natural Approach

The Natural Approach is a classroom manifestation of the theoretical proposals of the Monitor Model, but it in many respects it is also a logical development of the ideas underpinning the Cognitive Anti-Method. Formulated by Tracey Terrell in the 1970s and initially used simply as a method of teaching Spanish as a foreign language to university students in the United States, the Natural Approach was later theoretically motivated in terms of the Monitor Theory and came to have a wide influence on L2 instruction both in the US and across the world. Drawing on the ideas that Asher (1977) implemented in his TPR, it is perhaps the best-known realization of *comprehension-based methodology*, in which "listening comprehension (...) is viewed as the basic skill that will allow speaking, reading, and writing to develop spontaneously over time, given the right conditions (...) [and] learners should not speak until they feel ready to do so" (Celce-Murcia 2001b: 8). Additionally, the Natural Approach attaches marginal value to FFI and depends on an analytic syllabus (Wilkins 1976) built around communicative

activities and topics, which makes it a prime realization of experiential teaching. Its main goal was to help learners cope successfully with the language demands of everyday communication such as service encounters (e.g. booking plane tickets, etc.), conversations with friends or listening to the radio, and, thus, it aimed at the development of what Cummins (1980) has labeled *basic interpersonal communication skills* (BICS).

In their book characterizing the theoretical underpinnings and classroom applications of the Natural Approach Krashen and Terrell (1983: 20-21) lay out the following principles:

- comprehension precedes production;
- production is allowed to emerge in stages;
- the course syllabus consists of communicative goals;
- the acquisition-oriented activities which are done in the classroom must foster a lowering of the affective filter of the students.

In practical terms, this means that a silent period is advocated in the early stages and students are first expected to learn to comprehend, a task that will be facilitated if the teacher exclusively relies on the TL, strives to help learners understand the input, and ensures that communication revolves around topics they find interesting. When students are not forced to speak, they are believed to pass through three stages:

- 1) the *preproduction* or *prespeech stage* where listening comprehension skills are developed mostly through the use of TPR techniques;
- 2) the *early production phase*, in which learners generate their first error-fraught utterances;
- 3) the *extending production stage*, where games, role plays and discussions are employed to elicit longer and more complex utterances.

Error correction is generally discouraged and should be confined to inaccuracies which trigger communication breakdowns, and the role of grammar instruction is severely restricted. This is in line with what Krashen and Terrell label the *great paradox of language teaching*, which states that "Language is best taught when it is being used to transmit messages, not when it is explicitly taught for conscious learning" (1983: 55). Even though they acknowledge that grammar teaching can sometimes supplement acquisition-based activities to produce optimal Monitor-users, they hasten to add that "grammar

instruction has a limited role. Only certain rules need to be taught (...) only certain students will be able to profit from grammar instruction (...) [and] grammar use should be limited to situations where it will not interfere with communication (1983: 57). Finally, no matter whether teachers employ affective-humanistic, problem-solving or content activities, or perhaps games, they have to do their utmost to create positive affective states in their students as only in this way will they be receptive to comprehensible input, which will result in acquisition.

The Natural Approach still enjoys considerable popularity in North America where it is used to teach languages such as English, Spanish, French or German to beginners, and there is little doubt that it is capable of doing its job if the modest goal of helping learners develop basic conversational ability is to be accomplished. However, as is the case with immersion education, exclusively meaning-focused instruction is grossly inadequate if high levels of grammatical accuracy and thorough mastery of productive skills are ever to be envisaged. In fact, Krashen admits this limitation when he comments with reference to foreign language learners: "The goal of the language classes is to bring the beginner to the point where he or she can go to the country and obtain comprehensible input. It is important to point out that the goal of language classes is not to bring students to the highest levels of competence" (2003: 7). Reasonable as this may sound, there are also many learners who wish to move beyond the basic ability to understand and communicate messages, and TL exposure is often so scarce that we could wait for ever for speech to emerge or for grammatical structures to be subconsciously acquired. Thus, it seems more sensible to provide them with opportunities to speak from the very outset and to have recourse to FFI which can accelerate the natural processes of acquisition.

#### 2.4.4. Communicational Teaching Project

The Communicational Teaching Project (CTP), also known as the Bangalore Project, is yet another classroom implementation of the *zero option* and it was carried out by Prabhu and his associates in secondary schools in Southern India between 1979 and 1984 (cf. Prabhu 1980, 1984, 1987). Like Krashen, Prabhu believes that learners should be allowed to develop their comprehension abilities

before they are required to speak and that grammar can be acquired subconsciously through meaning-focused activities. At the same time, however, he argues that comprehensible input is insufficient for successful language development since active learner involvement, such as the intellectual effort invested in reasoning, is indispensable if the internal processes of acquisition are to be activated. For this reason, he replaced the linguistic syllabus with a *procedural syllabus*, which consists of tasks sequenced according to their conceptual difficulty and grouped by similarity. He also eschewed any kind of formal instruction, on the grounds that such teaching procedures entailed the danger of focusing learners' primary attention on language forms rather than the meanings expressed. Prabhu (1984: 275-276) spells out the principles of his innovative proposal in the following comment:

(...) any attempt to guide [learning] more directly (and whether or not explicitly) is rejected as being unprofitable and probably harmful. There is therefore no syllabus in terms of vocabulary or structure, no preselection of language items for any given lesson or activity and no stage in the lesson when language items are practiced or sentence production as such is demanded. The basis of each lesson is a problem or a task.

In effect, then, Prabhu rejects what he calls *structural-oral-situational teaching* and embraces an analytic syllabus (Wilkins 1976), or a *syllabus of means* (Breen 1983), organized in terms of the *activities and tasks* which encourage incidental language learning rather than listing the needs of instruction in the form of grammatical structures or linguistic functions and notions. Since a task was defined as "an activity which required learners to arrive at an outcome from given information through some process of thought, and which allowed teachers to control and regulate that process" (1987: 24), the syllabus consisted of a range of problem-oriented activities based on an *information, reasoning and opinion gap*. Although students typically completed such tasks on their own, they were preceded with similar whole-class pre-tasks performed with the help of the teacher, with both types of activity providing a basis for meaning-focused instruction "that required students to understand, convey or extend meaning, and where attention to language forms is only incidental" (Ellis 2003: 32).



It is difficult to overestimate the significance of the Bangalore Experiment in opening up new avenues in syllabus design and highlighting the ways in which incidental learning can be fostered through the use of communicative tasks. As such, the CTP can be regarded as an early version of the *process syllabus*, where the learning content and activities are negotiated with learners (Breen 1984, 2001), and, even more importantly, it can be viewed as the forerunner of different variants of task-based instruction (TBI) (see Chapter Four, sections 4.2.1. and 4.2.2.).<sup>11</sup> Also, the results of a formal evaluation of the project conducted by Beretta and Davies (1985) indicate that the innovation was effective, even though in some cases it failed to show the superiority of the procedural syllabus over the structural-oral-situational method, and, as Berretta (1990) subsequently found, it was not fully implemented by regular South Indian teachers.

As far as the weaknesses of the CTP are concerned, Long and Crookes (1992) list the absence of a task-based needs identification, the impossibility of verifying the appropriacy of the tasks selected and the arbitrariness with which these tasks were sequenced. Considering the focus of the present work, the most relevant criticism is the proscription of any kind of FFI, which, as Berretta and Davies (1985) found, resulted in the emergence of a certain degree of pidginization. Although Prabhu (1987) argues that such classroom pidgins should disappear in due course as is the case with emergent forms in L1 acquisition, Schumann's (1978) study of Alberto shows that fossilization is a much more likely outcome of an exclusive focus on communication. In fact, it would seem that had the syllabus of communicative tasks been complemented with some degree of formal instruction, the participants would not only have developed communicative ability but would also have been more accurate in their output, a point that is acknowledged by the present-day proponents of TBI (e.g. Skehan 1998; Willis and Willis 2001; Ellis 2003).

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<sup>11</sup> It should be pointed out that, apart from taking into account learners' needs and preferences in specifying teaching content, a *process syllabus* also differs from a *procedural syllabus* in allowing an explicit focus on language forms whenever learners view it as necessary and beneficial (Breen 2001).

## Conclusion

Over 25 years ago, dissatisfied with the limited effect that traditional instruction involving teaching grammar and explaining vocabulary appeared to have on overseas students preparing to study in postgraduate courses in Great Britain, Richard Allwright hypothesized that "if the language teacher's management activities are directed exclusively at involving the learners in solving communicative problems in the target language, then language learning will take care of itself" (1979: 170). Although the details of different theoretical justifications and classroom implementations may vary to some degree, such an assumption lies at the heart of the non-interventionist approaches to second and foreign language pedagogy that have been the focus of the present chapter. Its main aim has been to explain the rationale behind the *zero option*, which recommended the rejection of grammar instruction and error correction in favor of recreating in the classroom the conditions of naturalistic language acquisition, as well as to provide examples of how such proposals have been applied in classroom practice. Thus, the discussion in the first part of the chapter centered upon the findings of early empirical investigations of learner output which provided irrefutable evidence that learner language is a rule-governed system in its own right, there are orders and sequences of acquisition that all learners traverse on their way to the mastery of the target language, and instruction is largely powerless to alter the developmental pattern in any significant ways. This was followed by the presentation and evaluation of such theoretical positions as the Identity Hypothesis, Interlanguage Theory, UG-Based Approaches and Krashen's Monitor Model which, on the one hand, were motivated by such findings and, on the other, served as a basis for advancing the concrete classroom applications outlined in the final section. These included the Cognitive Anti-Method, immersion education, the Natural Approach and the Communicational Teaching Project. Although the four pedagogical proposals differ in some respects, they are all manifestations of acquisition-based approaches in adopting analytic syllabi (Wilkins 1976) and subscribing to the principles of experiential teaching (Stern 1992).

All in all, two inescapable conclusions appear to emerge from the discussion of such research findings, theories and methodologies. For one thing, the success of many untutored L2 acquirers as well as the largely positive outcomes of such pedagogic innovations as immersion programs or the Bangalore Project show that not only children but also adolescents and adults are capable of learning much of the target language incidentally and developing at least adequate levels of communicative ability. Such a qualified statement seems to be true both about uninstructed and classroom learning, and applies in equal measure to formal aspects of language. As Ellis (1997: 55) points out in conclusion to his overview of pertinent research findings, "It is possible for L2 learners to acquire a basic grammatical competence via classroom communication. Grammatical features such as English word order, which are important for functional communication, can probably be acquired naturally". Secondly, there is little doubt that FFI is powerless to aid learners in circumventing internal syllabuses, and that traditional language teaching in which students are mainly required to focus on isolated linguistic forms and are not accorded opportunities for meaningful communication is bound to run into the *inert knowledge problem*, and, as such, does little to foster successful acquisition. After all, it is difficult to take issue with Doughty (1998: 136) when she says: "communicative classes have been sometimes more sometimes less successful in fostering communicative competence in the second language. But their success is, in any case, much greater in terms of promoting fluency than that of the traditional language-as-object approaches".

Although such assumptions are undoubtedly valid and offer valuable insights into the characteristics of effective classroom instruction, it would be imprudent to invoke them as justification for outright rejection of pedagogic intervention. The fact that learners can acquire many aspects of language through communication, for example, does not mean that the acquisition process could not be more effective if it were supplemented with a certain amount of grammar teaching, especially in situations where target language exposure is severely limited. In fact, as demonstrated by research findings, even in such acquisition-rich contexts as immersion programs, learners' accuracy lags far behind their fluency, and it has been suggested that this problem could be remedied if teachers sometimes drew their students' attention to language forms. In a

similar vein, the orders and sequences of acquisition may be impervious to instruction, but perhaps the rate at which learners pass through developmental stages can be accelerated. Finally, even though the application of the experiential strategy produces better results than the use of the analytic strategy, it could reasonably be argued that a combination of the two could be even more beneficial. It is such potentially facilitative effects of form-focused instruction that will be the main theme of the following chapter.

## *Chapter Three*

# The case for form-focused instruction in classroom language learning

## Introduction

At present there is a broad consensus that plentiful exposure is indispensable for the development of TL communicative ability and some researchers argue that L2 acquisition will be additionally facilitated when learners are supplied with opportunities to produce output. It is also generally agreed that, similarly to naturalistic acquirers, classroom learners are capable of developing acceptable levels of communicative competence as a result of participating in discourse directed at a meaningful exchange of messages rather than drawing their attention to linguistic forms. As discussed in the preceding chapter, the students enrolled in immersion programs in Canada as well as the beginner learners participating in the Communicational Teaching Project succeeded in developing L2 communicative skills solely through learning subject-matter content or performing problem-solving tasks, respectively. Additionally, some research findings show that linguistic features can be acquired without the benefit of FFI (e.g. Terrell, Gomez and Mariscal 1980), and that learners receiving traditional instruction and those participating in meaning-focused activities manifest comparable levels of grammatical competence (e.g. Hammond 1988). All of this suggests, to use the words of Ellis, that "Giving beginner learners opportunities for meaningful communication in the classroom helps to develop communicative abilities and also results in linguistic abilities no worse than those developed through more traditional, form-focused approaches" (1994: 604).

Although it is hardly disputable that incidental learning can successfully occur in the classroom setting, it does not logically follow that it is the most efficient and effective way in which instructed language acquisition can proceed and that it is equally beneficial for all learners. After all, even when it is accepted that there are fixed orders and sequences of acquisition that cannot be

disrupted by pedagogic intervention, there still exists the possibility that form-focused instruction can speed up the learning process, lead to the acquisition of features which are not so constrained, or at least contribute to more accurate production and higher levels of achievement. Such reservations about the unconditional acceptance of the *zero option* and attempting to recreate in classrooms the conditions of naturalistic acquisition are eloquently expressed in the following quote from Larsen-Freeman (2003: 78):

(...) I believe it is a myth that grammar can be learned on its own, that it need not be taught. While some people can pick up grammar of a language on their own, few learners are capable of doing so efficiently, especially if they are postpubescent or if their exposure to the target language is somehow limited, such as might be the case where a foreign language is being acquired. Furthermore, very few learners, even if they have the opportunity to live in a community where the target language is spoken, would learn the grammar as efficiently outside the classroom as they can within it. The point of education is to accelerate the acquisition process, not be satisfied with or try to emulate what learners can do on their own. Therefore, what works in untutored language acquisition should not automatically translate into prescriptions and proscriptions for pedagogical practice for all learners.

Non-interventionist perspectives have also come in for criticism from other applied linguists who point to the limitations of such approaches and supply numerous theoretical, empirical and pedagogic explanations of how FFI can benefit classroom language learning (e.g. Higgs and Clifford 1982; Sharwood-Smith 1986; Doughty and Williams 1998c; Fotos 2002).

In the present chapter it is the intention of the author to make a strong case for the continued presence of form-focused instruction as an integral part of the language curriculum by considering the ways in which it can facilitate classroom language acquisition. In the first place, the weaknesses of purely communicative approaches will be presented together with suggestions as to how they could be improved upon through the inclusion of a certain amount of systematic attention to formal aspects of language. The focus of attention will then be shifted to the empirical investigations of the impact of FFI on language development. In particular, an attempt will be made to review the findings of studies comparing

the value of meaning-centered and code-focused teaching as well as those exploring the impact of formal instruction on general L2 proficiency, the rate of acquisition, ultimate levels of attainment, production accuracy and the permanence of treatment gains. This will be followed by the discussion of such influential theories and hypotheses providing justifications for the role of form-focused instruction as Skill-Learning Theory, the Multidimensional Model, the Noticing Hypothesis, the Delayed-Effect Hypothesis, Input Processing Theory, Interaction-Based Theories, connectionist perspectives and the Dual-Mode System Hypothesis. The chapter will close with the presentation and evaluation of an up-to-date theory of instructed language learning proposed by Ellis (1997), which constitutes an attempt to integrate different theoretical positions and serves as a basis for making concrete pedagogical recommendations.

### 3.1. Shortcomings of purely communicative approaches

One way in which the case for the beneficial effect or even necessity of FFI can be mounted is to consider the inadequacies of language teaching that is entirely or predominantly meaning-focused. Although, as mentioned above, such pedagogic innovations as immersion programs, natural approaches or procedural syllabuses have met with considerable success in helping learners become fluent and confident L2 users, they have also been shown to grapple with a number of acute problems, not least of which are their inapplicability to different cultural, institutional and educational contexts, and the relatively low level of learner attainment in terms of the mastery of grammatical structures. Obviously, it could easily be argued that such problems hardly constitute compelling evidence for the insufficiency of acquisition-based approaches as they could prove to be equally intractable even if the learners were provided with regular opportunities to attend to the forms of the TL. One could claim, for instance, that the failure of immersion students to acquire some grammatical or sociolinguistic distinctions may stem from the operation of the critical period rather than the virtual absence of pedagogic intervention. However, the inadequacies of deep-end CLT (Thornbury 2001b) are too glaring and too widely

acknowledged by researchers and practitioners alike to be so easily glossed over. For this reason, in the present section an overview of these problems will be provided in such areas as the nature of classroom discourse, the quality of learner output, learner characteristics and preferences, pedagogical considerations as well as contextual factors.

### 3.1.1. Nature of classroom discourse

Let us assume for a moment, as Krashen, Prabhu and other proponents of the *zero option approach* would have it, that meaning-focused communication is the necessary and sufficient condition for successful acquisition in a classroom setting. Logically, if such a non-interventionist position were to be accepted, not only would the teacher have to eschew grammar instruction and error correction, but, equally importantly, attempt to replicate to some extent in classroom discourse the conditions of naturalistic language acquisition, first or second. At this point, however, we run into a major difficulty as the results of research investigating interactive processes in the language classroom clearly demonstrate that "most L2 classrooms do not manifest these characteristics and, therefore, might be said to constitute acquisition-poor environments" (Ellis 1992a: 181).

Since a detailed description of the differences between naturalistic and pedagogic discourse is not directly relevant to the central theme of this work and can be found in a number of other publications (e.g. Ellis 1990, 1994; Van Lier 1996; Majer 2003; Pawlak 2004d), it would not be warranted to characterize them in great depth at this point. Suffice it to say that while the turn-taking rules in out-of-class communication are governed by competition and initiative, classroom interaction is typically characterized by communicative asymmetry, with the teacher allocating most of the turns, controlling their duration and predetermining the topic of learners' contributions (cf. Sinclair and Brazil 1982).<sup>1</sup> As far as other

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<sup>1</sup> One manifestation of the fact that classroom discourse is to a large extent teacher-controlled is the predominance of an interactional pattern that van Lier (1996) has referred to as *IRF questioning*, where the teacher asks a question, the learner responds, and feedback on the factual content or linguistic form of the learner's contribution is provided. Still, although its



aspects of classroom discourse are concerned, it has been found that in comparison to conversations in non-educational settings, it is marked by significantly more display than referential questions, a low incidence of negotiated sequences and, which is hardly surprising, the predominance of other-initiated other-repair, as when a student is directly corrected by the teacher. Also, teacher talk is typically oriented to the 'here and now', it contains more statements, more directives and fewer questions and past tense forms than the language native-speakers address to learners outside the classroom (cf. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974; Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks 1977; Long and Sato 1983; Pica and Long 1986). When we add to this the extremely restricted set of speech acts learners are required to perform as well as their extensive reliance on their L1, which is the norm in monolingual classes, the prospects for recreating the natural language experience look bleak indeed. If this is the case, the chances of activating the internal mechanisms responsible for the acquisition of grammar without the benefit of formal instruction are rather slim.

Obviously, the adherents of meaning-centered approaches could easily turn the argument around and claim that such findings only prove that the classrooms investigated are not communicative classrooms and that the acquisition-poor environment results from the teachers' failure to apply the most beneficial instructional procedures rather than factors that are beyond their control. Since such an explanation is plausible, it is necessary to determine whether similar deficiencies can be identified in instructional settings which have been purposefully designed to manifest all the characteristics of acquisition-rich environments, immersion education being a good case in point. As extensive research into French immersion has shown, however, such programs, generally regarded as a perfect illustration of experiential language teaching, may also fail to conform to the ideals envisaged by their supporters. Allen et al. (1990), for example, found that the immersion classroom environment was functionally restricted since the teacher's input contained very few instances of the sociolinguistically motivated use of 'tu' and 'vous', and provided learners with scant opportunities to produce

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extensive use is far removed from what transpires in out-of-class interactions and limiting in many respects, it can be a useful pedagogic tool which fosters learner involvement and participation (cf. Pawlak 2004e).

the plural form of the latter, a point that is also brought up by Swain (1992). Another alarming finding was that immersion students not only generated relatively little output, but their contributions were also extremely limited in length, with sustained speech (i.e. utterances made up of more than a single clause) accounting for less than 15% of the total number of student turns. Following Swain (1985, 1988), Allen et al. (1990) suggested that the learners should be provided with more opportunities for extended production, which could be attained if their teachers enabled them to initiate discourse, used more open-ended questions, and set up group activities. However, a study conducted by Tarone and Swain (1995) demonstrated that, just like in any other monolingual classroom, immersion students are likely to use their L1 in peer-peer interactions, which indicates that such problems could even be aggravated if group work tasks were frequently employed. Finally, research into intensive ESL classes showed that learners in communicative classrooms frequently fail to obtain what Lightbown (1992) calls *quality input*, the reason being that much of the TL they receive is *interlanguage talk*, or the imperfect output of their peers. According to Wong-Fillmore (1992), who reached similar conclusions on the basis of her observations of English classes for immigrant children in the US, extensive exposure of this kind can result in fossilization.

One way to interpret such findings is that even in the case of classes focused exclusively on the message rather than the code, it is wishful thinking to believe that classroom discourse can ever mirror in all important respects this found in naturalistic settings, which means that some aspects of communicative competence will remain beyond learners' grasp. To quote Ellis (1997: 51), "In short, although much can be done to make a classroom communicative, the resulting environment may not be conducive to successful grammar acquisition, because the input learners receive is impoverished, because they resort to their L1, and because the opportunities for certain kinds of output are limited". But, then, an argument could once again be invoked that rather than view such problems as an inherent limitation of purely meaning-based approaches, steps should be taken to eliminate them so that the natural learning requirements can be met. However, as many originators and ardent supporters of CLT admit, this may not be feasible and other solutions have to be devised to transform content-based or

communication-centered classrooms into acquisition-rich environments. After all, it is Swain (1992), a staunch advocate of communicative language teaching herself, who claims that such errors as the use of the present tense for recounting past events in immersion history classes should be corrected since otherwise the necessary input will not be provided.

Without doubt, the situation is even more complex in foreign language contexts such as the Polish one and it is very unlikely that in this case it will ever be possible to replicate in the classroom the conditions of naturalistic acquisition. The factors that conspire against it include, among other things, institutional constraints, teachers' and learners' belief systems, access to the shared L1, and, most importantly perhaps, the extremely meager amounts of in- and out-of-class exposure to the TL and the related artificiality of the whole instructional setting. In fact, as the present author found in his descriptive study of various aspects of classroom discourse during lessons conducted by Polish and American teachers in the Polish secondary school context, "(...) replicating the characteristics of general conversation in the foreign language classroom does not necessarily promote language development and, in some cases, can even hinder rather than foster that process" (Pawlak 2004d: 103). This is because excessive communicative symmetry in situations where learners are accustomed to form-focused rather than meaning-focused instruction is likely to diminish rather than augment the practice opportunities of less proficient students, negotiation of meaning is scarce, some degree of native language use is unavoidable, and explicit pedagogic intervention seems to be indispensable.

Obviously, this does not mean that classroom discourse cannot focus on communication, but only that, perhaps, it would be more realistic to accept the validity of what Edmondson (1985: 162) has called the *teacher's paradox* which states that "We seek in the classroom to teach people how to talk when they are not being taught". In other words, it should be acknowledged that pedagogic discourse is an integral component of an instructional setting and, as such, it can assist acquisition in the same way as interaction which resembles out-of-class communication. Perhaps, then, meaning-focused and form-focused instruction should be viewed as complementary rather than mutually exclusive.

### 3.1.2. Quality of learner output

If Krashen and his followers were right in claiming that all that is required for successful classroom acquisition is supplying learners with substantial amounts of comprehensible input or enabling them to participate in unfettered message-centered communication, immersion or intensive ESL classrooms would really be the perfect place to be for anyone wishing to pick up French or English effectively and almost effortlessly. After all, even though, in some cases, there may be little contact with the target language outside of school, students in such instructional settings are provided with large doses of meaning-focused input and rich output opportunities. Thus, it is only reasonable to assume that after several years of instruction their communicative competence should approximate that of native speakers. However, there is growing evidence to the contrary, which is perhaps not surprising taking into account the limitations of purely communicative classrooms discussed in the preceding section.

Generally speaking, researchers have found that although students in immersion and extensive second language programs tend to attain near-native speaker levels of discourse and strategic competence, and they can speak the language fluently, their grammatical competence lags far behind even after more than twelve years of instruction. There is also a wide disparity in the development of receptive and productive skills, with the former being statistically indistinguishable from native speakers and the latter remaining far from native-like (cf. Harley and Swain 1984; Genesee 1987; Hammerly 1987; Swain 1991; Harley 1992; Davidson and Snow 1995). One example of a problematic feature is the failure to use the 'voux' form appropriately, which, as mentioned above, can be traced back to its infrequent occurrence in classroom input. Another system that has been found to stabilize in inaccurate classroom form is that of nominal gender (Hammerly 1987), an instance of fossilization that can be explained in terms of limited salience of the form and lack of communicative pressure to produce it rather than insufficient exposure. Research has also shown that the language of immersion learners is plagued by errors involving tense aspect and morphology. In particular, Harley (1989) found that they had great difficulty in mastering the distinction between

the *passé composé* and *imparfait* tenses while Harley and Swain (1984) reported less than 50% accurate performance with certain types of verb inflections. Additionally, the sociolinguistic competence of immersion learners also leaves much to be desired and they invariably fail to acquire certain sociolinguistic distinctions (Tarone and Swain 1995).

Similar problems have been observed in intensive communicative ESL programs in Quebec where francophone learners are as successful as immersion students in developing comprehension and communicative abilities, but "their oral English is marked by numerous errors (...) common to virtually all students" (Lightbown 1992: 191), as reflected in their very frequent omission of plural '-s' or progressive '-ing'. As for other instructional settings, Ellis (1992b) investigated the requests produced by beginner learners enrolled in a communicative English language unit in London and found that although they performed substantial numbers of these forms, their ability to use such illocutionary acts was restricted and they were unable to systematically vary request types according to addressee. Poor quality of learner output was also reported by Higgs and Clifford (1982), who observed numerous foreign and second language programs emphasizing uninstructed communicative activities and concluded that "the premature immersion of a student into an unstructured or 'free' conversation before certain fundamental linguistic structures are more or less in place is not done without the cost" (1982: 78). On the whole, research findings appear to suggest that focusing exclusively on message conveyance leads to the development of a distinctive register which is adequate for fluent communication, but constitutes "a very defective and probably terminal classroom pidgin" (Hammerly 1987: 397). As a consequence, purely communicative classrooms may produce what Higgs and Clifford (1982) call *terminal L2s* who have quite rich vocabulary, but their accuracy is very low due to fossilized errors. As they say, this is what happens when "communicative competence is [understood] as a term for communication *in spite of* language, rather than communication *through* language" [emphasis original] (1982: 61).

On a more theoretical level, experiential approaches place a premium on providing learners solely with positive evidence which is so rich in linguistic data and so unfocused that learners are in no position to attend to particular TL forms (cf. Doughty 1998). This

renders incidental learning of a whole range of linguistic features rather unlikely and although it may be sufficient for promoting fluency, in the long run, it results in compromising accuracy. This position is partly supported by researchers who argue that while some grammatical features are intrinsically easy to acquire from exposure, others are not, and they may require the provision of FFI, or negative evidence. Bardovi-Harlig and Bofman (1989), for instance, provide evidence that morphological features such as plural formation, tense inflections, determiners and prepositions pose more serious learning problems than different areas of syntax, as is aptly demonstrated by the errors committed by advanced learners of English (see section 4.2.3. in Chapter 4 for a discussion of factors to be taken into account when selecting TL features to be taught). Thus, one reason why a sole emphasis on message and meaning creation falls short of assisting learners in the acquisition of certain grammatical structures might be that they are deprived of the opportunity to consciously attend to morphosyntactic and socio-pragmatic features of the TL. Pica (2000: 6) elucidates this issue in the following way:

(...) it is claimed that when attention is focused solely on communication of message meaning, learners are drawn almost exclusively to the meaning and comprehensibility of input, and only secondarily to the structures, sounds and forms that shape the input. Such communicative experiences weaken opportunities for learners to notice how L2 sounds and structures relate to the meanings of messages they encode, how social norms are observed and maintained linguistically, and how concepts such as time, action and activity, space, number and gender, are expressed lexically and/or morphosyntactically. Such communicative experiences can also limit access to L2 features such as functors and particles, that convey grammatical information, but carry little semantic meaning.

An additional problem is that exclusive reliance on the input evidence may make it impossible for learners to verify the hypotheses about the target language they have created on the basis of their L1, a point that was brought up in the previous chapter with reference to the process of UG parameter resetting. An example that is frequently cited in this connection involves French learners of English who experience considerable difficulty in acquiring the

rules of adverb placement (cf. White 1991). The reason is that while in French, and in Polish as well, it is possible to place an adverb between the verb and its object complement, English does not permit it (i.e. a sentence like 'I play every day volleyball' is incorrect), which leads to persistent errors and sometimes fossilization of the feature. Since positive evidence does not provide any information as to whether the hypothesis is right or wrong, learners can restructure their interlanguage systems in the direction of the TL only if they are provided with negative evidence of some kind (e.g. corrective feedback). The problem is that the requisite information about what is not permitted in the second language is typically not forthcoming in entirely meaning-centered instruction. Thus, to use the words of Doughty (1998: 143), "(...) the lack of negative evidence in the communicative language classroom may be a source of inaccurate learner language. In other words, communicative language teaching has not given learners the means to assess what is and what is not possible in the second language as they formulate and test out their interlanguage hypotheses".

In retrospect, it is perhaps hardly surprising that an exclusive focus on the provision of comprehensible input and opportunities for unfettered communication at the expense of formal instruction has not lived up to the expectations of theorists and researchers. After all, even naturalistic learners often fail to attain high levels of accuracy despite extended exposure and regular participation in spoken interactions in the target language. What readily comes to mind at this juncture is the frequently-cited Schmidt's (1983) longitudinal study of Wes, a Japanese painter living in Hawaii, who had abundant contact with native speakers of English and yet failed to progress much in his grammatical competence over a three year period, even though his sociolinguistic and discourse skills developed substantially. It stands to reason that, similarly to many students in purely communicative classrooms, he was able to accomplish communicative goals using a large repertoire of communication strategies, and, thus, the need for the accuracy of his utterances was effectively obviated. This indicates that the attainment of high levels of grammatical competence in situations where only experiential teaching takes place may be an impossible dream as long as it is not complemented with more or less explicit pedagogic intervention which would bring learners' attention to form-function mappings (i.e. the relationships between a particular

structure and the meaning it realizes in communication). As Lightbown rightly points out: "There is no doubt that a great deal of language acquisition will take place without focused instruction and feedback, when learners are exposed to comprehensible input and opportunities for meaningful interaction. However, some features of language are very difficult – or perhaps impossible – to acquire in this way" (1998: 196).

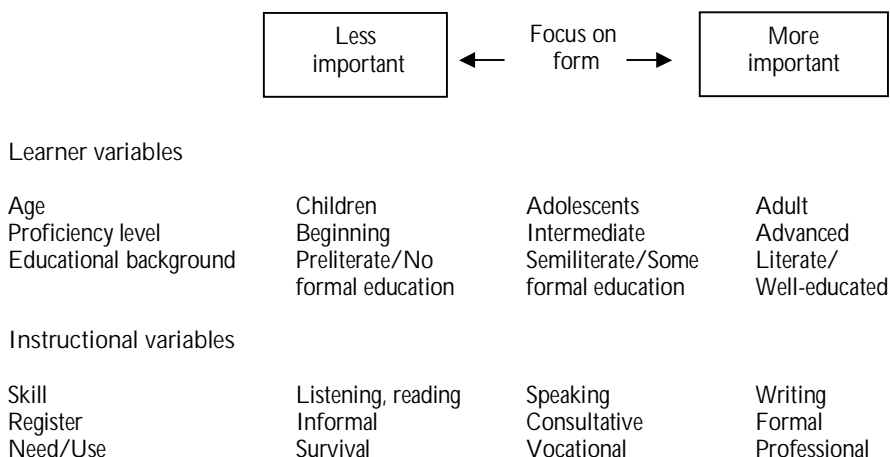
### 3.1.3. Learners' characteristics and preferences

An important argument against completely eliminating a grammar component from the second or foreign language curriculum can also be offered on the grounds that such a decision would in many cases ignore the individual characteristics of the learners and sometimes go against their own goals and needs. It is now widely acknowledged, for instance, that while it is neither necessary nor perhaps beneficial to overtly focus on language forms in teaching young children, a certain amount of FFI is likely to facilitate and expedite the learning process in the case of adolescents and adults. A plausible justification for such a stance could be that, while learners before the onset of puberty continue to have access to the internal faculty, be it in the form of Chomsky's UG or Slobin's (1985b) operating principles, the availability of this mechanism atrophies or maybe even disappears with age, with the effect that older learners have to increasingly or exclusively rely on general problem-solving skills (see Chapter Two, section 2.3.3.). The necessity of taking learners' preferences, needs and goals into account is probably even less controversial as it is a distinctive feature of learner-centered instruction, which constitutes one of the central tenets of CLT (cf. Tudor 1997; Brown 2001). Thus, logically, when learners are willing to focus on the accuracy of their output, even the most communicatively-oriented teacher should at least partly accommodate such wishes.

An applied linguist who has sought to explore the relationship between different variables, including learner characteristics, and the importance of grammar teaching is Celce-Murcia (1991). As can be seen from Figure 3.1., attention to the forms of the target language increases with age, proficiency level, literacy skills and the level of education. Thus, for example, it can be surmised that teenagers at an intermediate level of proficiency who have received about ten years



of well-rounded education, as is the case with the subjects of the studies reported in Chapter Five, can be expected to benefit from FFI and may even require it. By contrast, the importance of code-focused instruction is somewhat diminished in teaching beginners, irrespective of their age, which sits quite well with research findings showing that such learners can acquire certain grammatical features from meaning-focused input and output (Ellis 1994). Much also depends on whether a particular course focuses on receptive or productive skills, whether the emphasis is placed on formal or informal register and the uses to which the language is likely to be put, with classes in formal writing taught for professional purposes necessitating large amounts of explicit pedagogical intervention.



*Figure 3.1. Variables determining the importance of grammar (Celce-Murcia 1991: 465).*

Obviously, such comments can only be viewed as guidelines rather than prescriptions or proscriptions, since, in many instructional settings, the situation may be much more complex as a result of an interplay of many diverse factors. To give an example, a course aimed at helping doctoral students understand scientific reports in German is not likely to include a substantial grammar component, and a course for beginners at the age of twelve might do so, if the learners are required to take a standardized test gauging their ability to manipulate language forms. There are also situations where

students aim at advanced proficiency and high levels of accuracy in both spoken and written production because only in this way can they hope to function effectively in academic or vocational communities. Finally, it should be noted that there exist many other cognitive, affective and socioeconomic differences between learners concerning their language aptitude, cognitive styles, motivation or family background, to name but a few, which can have a bearing on the need for FFI, its timing and intensity as well as the form it should take.

As regards learner beliefs, goals and needs, many students expect to be taught grammar and it is rather unwise to turn a deaf ear to their pleas even if their preferences happen to clash with the teacher's assumptions concerning what counts as effective language pedagogy. The need to understand the intricacies of TL grammar is typically expressed by older learners such as adolescents or adults, and it is perhaps more likely to come to the fore in foreign language contexts, where FFI has never been entirely abandoned, and undoubtedly testifies to students' past learning experiences (cf. Fotos 1998). Another possible reason for the preoccupation with grammar is that mastering it gives learners a sense of accomplishment and security, and they believe that knowing the rules will aid them in creating and comprehending new utterances (cf. Larsen-Freeman 2003). An interesting questionnaire study investigating learners' and teachers' perspectives on how grammar is taught in Polish elementary, junior high and senior high schools was conducted by the present author's BA student (Stolarek 2005). She found that although most of the learners believed that the ability to communicate should be the most important goal of L2 learning, over 70% stated that grammar is important and commented that it cannot be mastered without a large-number of form-oriented exercises. Not surprisingly, such beliefs are shared by teachers, which may be reflective of their awareness of the students' preferences or, what is at least equally likely, the fact they were taught in this way themselves and such assumptions have been carried over into their own instructional practices. Evidence for this hypothesis comes from a study carried out by the present writer (Pawlak in press), who found that over 65% of Polish teachers of English from different types of schools were confident that grammar instruction is necessary and almost 35% that it is at least

helpful. In addition, 64% of the respondents believed that their students wanted to be taught grammar.

Obviously, impressive as they may be, such numbers should not be taken to mean that most students in most contexts always look forward to being provided with yet another neat rule or numerous translation and fill-in-the-gap exercises. Besides, even in these studies, there were quite a few subjects who were more communicatively-oriented and treated the TL as a tool for exchanging messages rather than a collection of rules to be mastered and applied in decontextualized activities. We also have to bear in mind that even those learners who think that grammar teaching is useful would balk at having to spend a few lessons in a row, say, changing sentences from active to passive and the other way round. Nonetheless, as studies exploring the characteristics of good language learners have shown, successful students do not only focus on meaning communication, but also attend to formal aspects of the TL (e.g. Reiss 1985; Drożdżal-Szelest 1997). This indicates that deliberately depriving learners of FFI may do more harm than good since it goes against their natural inclinations. Moreover, it may turn out to be a futile effort as many students will go to great lengths to understand the structures they notice irrespective of the kind of teaching their instructors deem the most effective.

### 3.1.4. Pedagogical considerations

Swan (2002) acknowledges that there are some parts of the world where far too much emphasis is still being placed on teaching language forms and identifies what he describes as *seven bad reasons* for such a state of affairs. In his view, many teachers attach excessive importance to grammar because it is systematically covered in the coursebook, it looks tidy and teachable in comparison with, say, vocabulary or speaking, it easily lends itself to testing, and it provides a security blanket since "in the convoluted landscape of a foreign language, grammar rules shine out like beacons" (2002: 150). In addition, some teachers are convinced that grammar should be given pride of place because they struggled to master it themselves, and believe that this is exactly what it takes to become a successful language learner. Besides, for those who enjoy wielding power, it gives a considerable edge over students particularly in situations where their own command of the other subsystems or skills is

lacking. It is also relevant that grammar is often perceived as a set of closely interconnected elements, all of which have to be mastered for the system to work.

Swan (2002), however, could not be more disinclined to argue that form-focused instruction should be abandoned and also provides two powerful arguments for including a grammar component in the curriculum. One is that "knowing how to build and use certain structures makes it possible to communicate common types of meaning successfully" (2002: 151). The other is related to the fact that in some contexts learners can benefit from far greater correctness of their written and spoken output than that needed for mere comprehensibility, an issue that was brought up above and will be further expanded upon in the following section. Important as they are, if the two reasons were to be the sole pedagogical justifications for the facilitative effect of FFI, the supporters of the *zero option* could perhaps maintain that there is little point in bothering with it. However, applied linguists and methodologists have pointed to several other pedagogical considerations which reveal the insufficiency of purely meaning-focused instruction.

One area where approaches that eschew a focus on grammar may be missing the mark is syllabus design. According to Ellis (2002a), while the value of notional-functional, task-based or topic-oriented syllabuses can hardly be denied, the constructs on which they are based are not as generative and do not ensure as comprehensive and systematic a coverage of TL forms as a structural syllabus. For example, if the teacher chooses to devote a specific lesson to expressing obligation, making apologies or talking about traveling, there is no guarantee that the requisite grammatical points will come up in classroom discourse, and, even if they do, learners may fail to notice them, let alone be provided with more or less extensive practice opportunities. After all, obligation can be expressed in various ways, people can apologize more or less formally or overtly, and the range of structures that can be drawn upon to discuss past, present and future journeys is extremely wide. Task-based syllabuses, which are very much in vogue at present, are afflicted with similar limitations. As will be shown in the following chapter, although it is possible to design communicative tasks which induce students to employ a particular form, it is not feasible with all linguistic features since students are adroit at avoiding structures

they find problematic (Loschky and Bley-Vroman 1993). This being the case, it seems reasonable to assume that the goal of a full and systematic treatment of L2 grammar can only be achieved by means of a structural syllabus built around properly selected and sequenced grammatical features. As Ellis (2002a: 21) comments, "Such a syllabus provides teachers and learners with a clear sense of progression – something that I think is missing from both notional and task-based syllabuses". Obviously, this does not mean that there is no place for meaning-based syllabuses in the foreign language classroom, but, rather, that they should be skillfully combined to enhance the quality and effectiveness of classroom language learning (see Chapter Four, section 4.2.2.).

A somewhat related issue is the development of instructional materials that would satisfy the stringent requirements imposed by purely communicative approaches. As anyone who has ever been involved in the business of language teaching would doubtless attest, materials that would be entirely meaning-centered or at least attempt to teach grammar entirely implicitly are few and far between and not readily available on the publishing market, Poland being no exception. Moreover, paradoxical as it may seem, many coursebooks which are ostensibly advertised as communicative in fact heavily rely on the preselection and sequencing of grammatical structures which are later practiced in a gradually less controlled and more contextualized manner, thus reflecting continued adherence to the PPP model. In fact, even a cursory look at such recently published coursebooks as, for example, *Inspiration*, *Sky*, *Matrix* or *Upstream*, shows that although they are dubbed as theme-based and are intended for different levels of instruction (i.e. elementary, junior and senior high school), they all share the concern with grammatical competence and seek to develop it in fairly traditional ways. What may also give communicatively-oriented teachers a headache is the fact that such materials either include only very few communicative activities and tasks necessitating productive or receptive use of specific language features, or, even worse, fail to address this problem altogether (cf. Fotos 2002). As a consequence, practitioners who would wish to teach the L2 mainly through communication would be forced to search for additional materials or generate their own activities and then somehow squeeze them into the syllabus, a proposal that few of them would be willing to accept. Taking all of this into account, it would appear that even if exclusively meaning-focused approaches

are all that is needed for successful acquisition, they fail to provide teachers with effective tools by means of which they could be implemented. Obviously, the fact that such tools are not forthcoming could also mean that this kind of instruction is not so effective after all, or else, it would be reflected in the teaching materials brought out by major publishing houses.

Building on the theory developed by the cognitive psychologist David Ausubel (e.g. Ausubel, Novak and Hanesian 1978), some researchers have also suggested that grammar instruction can serve as an *advance organizer* and help learners activate their previous knowledge of language forms when they are requested to perform meaning-focused activities (e.g. Lightbown 1992; Robinson 1996; Fotos 2002). This is based on the assumption that, as is the case with learning any other set of symbols for familiar meanings, success in learning another language depends on the ability to create connections between the target language symbols and the meaningful symbols which are already represented in the learner's mind through his or her native language. An explicit focus on a grammar point at the beginning of a language lesson acts as an advance organizer that creates a link between the new knowledge and the existing cognitive structure, thus assisting the construction as well as more effective organization and functioning of form-meaning relationships. In this way, grammar instruction may assume the role of a *priming mechanism*. Another merit of such a proposal is that, in the long run, it could contribute to greater accuracy of learner output, a problem to which the proponents of non-interventionist positions have not as yet been able to offer an expedient solution (cf. Doughty and Williams 1998c). Both this and other issues discussed in the present section strongly indicate that a total rejection of form-focused instruction together with structural syllabuses which tend to underlie it cannot be warranted on pedagogical grounds.

### 3.1.5. Contextual factors

The fact that experiential approaches have been mushrooming across Canada and the US might create the false impression that communicative methodology is universally accepted and traditional grammar-based syllabuses, pattern drills, translation exercises or presentation-practice-production procedures are by and large a thing

of the past. However, such an assumption could not be further from the truth since, as emphasized by Skehan (1998) and Fotos (2002), communicative approaches have only had a marginal impact on language pedagogy across the globe and there are numerous school systems where traditional teaching practices, so much frowned upon by SLA theorists, have been perpetuated. This is particularly evident in foreign language contexts, where language instruction is limited to just a few hours a week, out-of-class exposure is scarce and the vast majority of teachers are not native speakers of the TL. As Fotos (1998: 301) appositely comments: "In many of these areas, the old ways are still the dominant educational paradigm, and communicative teaching is just beginning to become an instructional option. Here, grammar teaching has never left the classroom". Although these words were written some time ago, they are still valid. Beyond doubt, they apply in equal measure to the Polish educational context, where the virtues of communicative methodology are constantly being extolled and its principles figure heavily in the new curricula but are perhaps only seldom implemented, with many teachers choosing to pay lip service to meaning-based instruction rather than making it happen. Furthermore, it could reasonably be argued that if such comments pertain to the teachers of English, it is surely no different in the case of other foreign languages, whose methodologies tend to follow the course set by the English teaching world. And, it should be emphasized, we are talking here about *shallow-end* and not *deep-end CLT* (Thornbury 2001b), since a complete rejection of FFI is surely not an option that many Polish teachers would ever contemplate.

One reason why it is so difficult even for the less radical versions of meaning-centered approaches to take root in foreign language settings is that they are frequently difficult to reconcile with the existing sociocultural limitations and the constraints imposed by the educational system. Thus, for example, active participation in class, venturing contributions without being sure whether or not they are correct, revealing personal information or taking charge of the process of learning, all of which is advocated to a greater or lesser extent by communicative methodology, may fly in the face of deeply-rooted educational principles (cf. Harmer 2001). As such, some of the recommended attitudes to the learning process or specific classroom behaviors may be painfully slow to catch on not only in the authority-oriented cultures of Japan and Korea, but

also in Poland and many other nations of Central and Eastern Europe. There is also the question of the nature of assessment procedures used, since focusing primarily on message conveyance in situations where high levels of accuracy are required on diverse examinations would be at best shortsighted. Even though the senior high school final exam system in Poland has been overhauled, accuracy still counts to some degree at the more advanced level and voices can be heard that its status should be enhanced. And, obviously, it would be unwise to forget that teachers are also part of the equation since they have their own deeply-ingrained beliefs reflecting the methodological principles they cling to, their personalities, views on what counts as effective teaching and past learning experiences (Richards and Lockhart 1994). In addition, some of them may not possess the requisite TL communicative ability to implement even the shallow-end variant of CLT. As a consequence, many lessons are conducted mainly in the learners' L1, with the primary focus on grammar and vocabulary exercises acting as an invaluable safety net. Such factors have to be taken heed of since, as research into innovation in language teaching indicates, new proposals requiring changes in classroom practices and underlying pedagogical values are the least likely to succeed (Stoller 1994). There is little doubt that replacing analytic teaching with a predominantly experiential strategy constitutes a prime example of such a proposal.

Even if all of these barriers could eventually be overcome, it is questionable whether an acquisition-based approach can effectively contribute to successful development of TL communicative competence. For one thing, as pointed out in one of the preceding sections, it is for the most part unfeasible to recreate in the foreign language classroom the conditions of naturalistic discourse, and an attempt to do so can in fact backfire and make the instructional setting even less conducive to learning (cf. Pawlak 2004d). But, even if this obstacle were to be surmounted and teachers managed to miraculously transform their classrooms into such acquisition-rich environments, there remains the intractable problem of inadequate intensity of instruction. Probably not even Krashen would go as far as to argue that it is possible to successfully acquire even the rudiments of an L2 when teaching is limited to three or four 45-minute lessons weekly, or, allowing for holidays, seasonal breaks or teachers' days off, perhaps around 120-130 per school year. This is a



woefully minute amount of exposure when compared with what the students in Canadian immersion or intensive ESL programs receive, and yet, as will be recalled from the preceding discussion, they typically fail to attain high levels of accuracy. Finally, as stated above, there can be little hope that classroom instruction will be supplemented to any substantial degree with out-of-school exposure which could somehow provide the input necessary to activate internal processing mechanisms. Even though there can be differences in this respect between learners from big cities and small town or villages, access to the TL in the environment is restricted, as it is perhaps overly optimistic to expect that many learners will avail themselves of the opportunities on hand. Obviously, English books and magazines, TV channels and DVDs offering access to different language versions are out there, but perhaps only a fraction of learners will ever reach for them, either because of their busy schedules, an abundance of more appealing pastimes, or, simply, because such sources are not on offer in the local community or they are too expensive.

All things considered, it appears warranted to argue that there will always be a place for FFI in foreign language contexts, which does not in the least deny the importance of maximizing learners' TL exposure or providing them with opportunities for meaningful communication. A plausible solution, then, could be ensuring that language classrooms combine the benefits of meaning-centered teaching as well as appropriately timed, targeted and sequenced instruction.

### 3.2. Research into the effectiveness of form-focused instruction

Important and insightful as they are, the numerous arguments that an exclusive emphasis on message comprehension and communication is inadequate do not constitute in themselves definitive proof that FFI enhances the effectiveness of classroom language learning. It could be claimed, for instance, that students who receive entirely meaning-focused instruction fail to internalize certain grammatical and sociolinguistic features not because they are not afforded opportunities to attend to them, but, rather, because such forms cannot be acquired under any circumstances, either as a conse-

quence of L1 influence, or lack of continued access to UG or some other internal processing mechanisms (cf. Long 1990; Doughty 2003). For this reason, it appears crucial to empirically investigate the effect of pedagogic intervention on different aspects of instructed language acquisition, a line of enquiry that has been pursued by many researchers and will be explored in detail in the present section.

When Michael Long (1983b, 1988) first posed in earnest the question as to whether formal instruction makes a difference in 1983 and reconsidered it in 1988, there was only a handful of mostly comparative studies available that could be included in the review and serve as a basis for reaching rather tentative conclusions. As illustrated in Chapter One, since the time these preliminary attempts were undertaken, research investigating the effectiveness of FFI has evolved considerably, which is evident not only in the exponential growth in the sheer numbers of studies conducted, but also in their scope, design and the measures of target language ability used (cf. Norris and Ortega 2000, 2001; Doughty 2003; Norris and Ortega 2003). This being the case, it would plainly be impossible to embark here on a thorough description, evaluation and interpretation of the findings of even a fraction of the studies carried out to date. Thus, in what follows, we will mainly focus on the areas of investigation which are the most pertinent to determining the impact of formal instruction on classroom language acquisition, and, in most cases, confine the discussion to several key studies and refer the reader to other relevant research.

There are three specific lines of enquiry that will not be dealt with in the present section even though some pertinent studies can be invoked at one point or another, and these include the effect of instruction on acquisition processes, the extent to which pedagogic intervention can impact the orders and sequences of acquisition, and the effectiveness of different types of FFI.<sup>2</sup> The first issue does not address the question of whether grammar teaching is effective and is

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<sup>2</sup> Acquisition processes can include, for instance, transfer, generalization, elaboration, stabilization, destabilization, noticing, omission and oversuppliance (e.g. Doughty 2003; DeKeyser 2003; Long 2003; Odlin 2003; Romaine 2003). Although instructed and naturalistic learners have been found to follow the same developmental stages, there is general agreement that some of the processes employed by the two groups differ quite considerably.

perhaps of more interest to SLA researchers concerned with theory building rather than those seeking classroom applications, thus having little relevance to our deliberations. As for the remaining two, one was discussed in section 2.2.5. of Chapter Two as part of the justification for the non-interventionist stance, and the other will be considered in Chapter Four together with the value of methodological options in FFI.

In effect, the following sections will be concerned with studies which compared the relative benefits of meaning-focused and form-focused teaching as well as such which attempted to determine the relationship between instruction and general language proficiency, the rate of acquisition, the ultimate level of attainment, production accuracy and the durability of instructional treatments. Although the findings of such research are mixed and inconclusive in some cases and methodological problems abound, it can be stated with confidence that FFI can have a beneficial influence on learners' interlanguage development provided it does not attempt to violate the natural processes of acquisition (cf. Ellis 1994, 1997; Norris and Ortega 2000, 2001; Ellis 2001b). More specifically, as Spada and Lightbown (2002: 126) point out, "(...) instruction can have a significant effect on L2 acquisition, at least in terms of the rate of learning and the long-term success that learners achieve in using the language accurately".

### 3.2.1. Comparisons of the effectiveness of meaning-focused and form-focused instruction

Before delving into the discussion of the studies which specifically set out to investigate the effect of FFI on different aspects of TL development and the acquisition of specific linguistic features, it appears fitting to take a look at the few research projects which have compared the relative benefits of the experiential and analytic strategy. Although research of this kind has not typically been intended to explore the value of formal instruction as such, but, rather, to demonstrate that students in purely meaning-focused and often innovative programs fare at least no worse than those in traditional classrooms, it is clearly germane to the leading theme of this chapter. On the whole, there is a paucity of such studies which can perhaps be related to the failure of global method comparisons to produce conclusive results and the widespread disappointment

with this type of enquiry. This, however, does not prevent Krashen and his followers from continuing to employ this research paradigm in order to prove the superiority of comprehension-based approaches (e.g. Mason and Krashen 1997). It should also be noted that the present review does not include studies which sought to compare the effectiveness of the Total Physical Response and teaching based on traditional methods (e.g. Asher 1977; Wolfe and Jones 1982). Although Krashen views their results as evidence for his Monitor Model, such comparisons are hardly relevant since, in following a structural syllabus and in fact attempting to teach grammar inductively, the TPR can by no means be regarded as an example of experiential teaching (cf. Ellis 1997).

A perfect illustration of research comparing the benefits of meaning-focused and form-focused instruction is a study conducted by Lightbown (1983, 1992), briefly referred to earlier in this chapter in which she sought to evaluate a pedagogic innovation launched in several small-town and rural schools in New Brunswick, Canada. In this comprehension-based program, francophone children learning English worked entirely on their own, simultaneously reading and listening to recordings of books for one half-hour a day. Although the teacher was around to help the children with the equipment or locating the materials, there were no traditional lessons in the form of teacher-student interactions, formal instruction or testing. After three years, such learners were compared with students who had received a similar amount of instruction by means of an interactive audiolingual program with a focus on grammar. It turned out that the ability to understand written and spoken English was similar in both groups, but the experimental learners had developed richer vocabulary and were more fluent and accurate in speaking. When it comes to grammatical competence, they did worse than the control students on the regular program test but outperformed them on a range of neutral tests where they displayed superior ability to produce some inflections, more elaborate noun phrases and longer sentences. Even though such findings provide evidence that it is possible to acquire certain features of grammar in the absence of FFI, both the experimental and control subjects in the study were at basic levels of English development. Thus, Lightbown cautions that "(...) no claim is made for a comprehension-based program as a sufficient basis for reaching high levels of language mastery" (1992: 190).

Another example of a comparison of the benefits of experiential and analytic teaching is the evaluation of the Bangalore Project conducted by Beretta and Davies (1985), which was mentioned in passing in section 2.2.4. of Chapter Two. They compared the experimental classes with classes taught by means of the structural-oral-situational method, and found that while the former did better on task-based and dictation tests, the latter outdid them in more traditional structure-based and contextualized grammar tests. Since the situation was further confounded by the fact that better qualified teachers were assigned to the CTP classes and the learners were beginners, the results at best provide only partial support for the superiority of meaning-focused instruction.

As far as more recent research of this kind is concerned, it has mainly been conducted with a view to defending the claims of the Input Hypothesis. A recent addition to this line of enquiry is a study carried out by Rodrigo, Krashen and Gribbons (2004) which compared the effectiveness of two comprehensible-input approaches and a more traditional teaching method in the case of intermediate-level learners of FL Spanish at an American university. While one input group was taught by means of assigned and self-selected extensive reading and the other did the same assigned readings but also participated in discussions based on such material, the students in the traditional group participated in a course featuring explicit instruction in grammar and vocabulary. It was found that both input groups outperformed the traditional class on a vocabulary checklist test and a grammar test, and either tended to do better or there was no difference on a cloze test. The researchers argue that "The results thus provide support for the efficacy of comprehensible input-based approaches [and] confirm that vocabulary and grammar can be acquired via comprehensible input (...)" (2004: 59). This comment, however, appears to be overly optimistic in the light of the fact that very little was revealed about the design of the study, no attempt was apparently made to determine whether the three groups were at the same level prior to the treatment, and the information about the testing instruments is too skimpy to exclude the possibility of the practice effect having influenced the findings. In addition, there is no knowing what kind of instruction the students had received before the study got under way, and it is at least likely that it could have involved a considerable amount of FFI, as is typical of L2 teaching at the university level. All in all, although

there is no denying that some features can be acquired through exposure or meaningful communication, neither this nor the other studies discussed above provide convincing evidence that high levels of accuracy can be attained without the benefit of conscious attention to language forms.

### 3.2.2. The effect of form-focused instruction on general language proficiency

Early research into the effectiveness of FFI did not investigate the acquisition of specific linguistics features but, rather, consisted in making very global and thus necessarily crude comparisons between the levels of TL proficiency attained by instructed and naturalistic learners, or such who had experienced various combinations of both conditions. As mentioned above, one of the first attempts to review and interpret this kind of research was made by Long (1983b) who considered a total of 11 studies, six of which provided support for the value of formal instruction (e.g. Briere 1978), three found that it did not work (e.g. Mason 1971), one showed that sheer exposure was beneficial (Martin 1980), and the remaining two were ambiguous due to incorrect interpretation of the results. To be more precise, the studies permitted five types of comparisons between instruction and exposure, which are included in Table 3.1. below together with the results obtained and the possible interpretations thereof offered by Doughty (2003) on the basis of Long's original analysis. Such comparisons led Long to conclude that "there is considerable evidence to indicate that SL instruction does make a difference" (1983b: 374) and to suggest that its benefits were evident:

- both for children and adults;
- for intermediate as well as advanced learners;
- on both integrative or discrete-point tests;
- in classrooms representing acquisition-rich or acquisition-poor environments.

Although the studies included in Long's original review set out to investigate the relative effects of instruction and exposure on the general level of language proficiency, in many cases the learners experienced various combinations of the two conditions. Therefore, it is conceivable that it is some kind of mixture of naturalistic

Type of comparison	Findings	Interpretation
1 The relative utility of equal amounts of instruction and exposure.	Four studies showed no differences.	Instruction beneficial for those for whom classroom is the only opportunity for exposure.
2 The relative utility of varying amounts of instruction and exposure when the sum total of both is equal.	Two studies with ambiguous findings.	None possible.
3 Varying amounts of instruction when the amount of exposure is held constant.	Two studies showed that more instruction led to more acquisition.	Either more instruction is beneficial, or more instruction merely serves as more exposure.
4 Varying amounts of exposure when the amount of instruction is held constant.	Three studies showed variable results. One study was matched to the type of study in type 3 and showed that fewer subjects with more exposure scored higher on proficiency measures.	Taken together, the results of studies of types 3 and 4 support the benefits of instruction <i>per se</i> .
5 Independent effects of varying amounts of both instruction and exposure when the sum total of both also varies.	Of four studies of this type, all showed a benefit for instruction, and three showed a benefit for exposure. The strength of the relationship was greater for instruction than for exposure.	Taken together, the results of studies of types 4 and 5 support the benefits of instruction.

*Table 3.1. The advantage for instruction over exposure (adapted from Doughty 2003: 260, based on Long 1983b).*

acquisition and formal instruction rather than either of the two alone that is likely to be the most advantageous, an issue that was investigated in several studies conducted more or less in the same period (cf. Ellis 1994). Savignon (1972), for example, compared the communicative and grammatical ability of three FL French classes, all of which received four hours of instruction a week, but only the experimental one benefited from an extra lesson devoted entirely to communicative tasks. The learners in this class outperformed the others on communication-oriented measures but not on grammar-

focused tests, which suggests that adding a meaning-centered element to traditional instruction fosters the development of communicative skills. Likewise, Montgomery and Eisenstein (1985) found that Hispanic learners who participated in a course focusing on communication over and above structure-based ESL classes, manifested greater pretest-posttest gains in grammar and pronunciation than the students who only attended the regular program. Finally, Spada (1986) reported that adult learners of English at an intermediate level of proficiency were more likely to improve on grammar and writing tests when formal instruction was supplemented with contacts with native speakers. In all of these cases, however, the sum total of TL exposure was greater in the experimental groups, which makes it difficult to unambiguously attribute the improvement to any particular type of instruction.

On the whole, the findings of the early research into the effectiveness of FFI are damaging to the claims of Krashen's Monitor Model and indicate that "(...) formal instruction helps learners (both foreign and second) to develop greater L2 proficiency, particularly if it is linked with opportunities for natural exposure. Foreign learners appear to benefit by developing greater communicative skills, while second language learners benefit by developing greater linguistic accuracy" (Ellis 1994: 617). Such a conclusion is reflected in Stern's (1992) proposal that the best option would be a combination of the experiential and analytic strategy as there is "(...) no reason to assume that one strategy alone offers the royal road to proficiency" (1992: 321). It can also be detected in the idea that the learners' attention should be drawn to language forms during communicative activities (e.g. Lightbown and Spada 1990) and the related concept of Long's (1991) *focus on form* (see Chapter One, section 1.1.). Although such pedagogical recommendations were supported by further research, the early FFI studies suffered from a number of limitations (e.g. no information about the nature of instruction) and, thus, caution has to be exercised when interpreting their findings. For this reason, there was a need for research into code-focused instruction to be better designed and address more specific questions and it is such issues to which we now turn.



### 3.2.3. Form-focused instruction, acquisition rate and ultimate level of attainment

In yet another attempt to make sense of the available studies, Long (1988) looked into the effects of FFI on the processes, route and rate of L2 learning as well as the ultimate level of attainment. Since, for reasons spelled out above, neither the processes nor the orders and sequences of acquisition are considered in this chapter, the present section will concentrate on the last two domains, which are in fact closely related and can be regarded as two sides of the same coin. Long (1988) concluded that the provision of formal instruction was beneficial in both cases and hypothesized that native-like levels of communicative competence may not be achievable through exposure alone. What is important, these assumptions have been largely corroborated in numerous empirical investigations carried out since this initial review.

As the label indicates, the *rate of acquisition* refers to the speed with which learners advance in their target language proficiency, or, to use more technical terms, pass through the developmental sequences identified by researchers. In general, although the route of acquisition is largely impervious to pedagogic intervention, "evidence continues to accumulate that the rate of instructed SLA is faster than that of naturalistic SLA" (Doughty 2003: 262). Such an effect was obviously demonstrated by most of the early studies discussed in the previous section and has been confirmed by research exploring the acquisition of different areas of syntax. Both Pienemann (1984) and Ellis (1989), for example, found that appropriately timed FFI, that is, such in which learners' psycholinguistic readiness is taken into account, can speed up the passage through developmental stages in the acquisition of German word order rules. Also, studies conducted by Pavesi (1986) and Gass (1982) demonstrated that the provision of formal instruction accelerates the learning of such hard and unteachable grammar (Krashen 1985) as relative clause formation in English. Accelerated language development in response to intensive FFI has also been observed in more recent investigations carried out by Mackey and Philip (1997) or Mackey (1999), which also showed higher levels of attainment. Despite such promising findings, researchers have tended to interpret a rate advantage as constituting only weak

evidence for the value of FFI in view of the fact that pedagogic intervention is powerless to affect developmental sequences. However, as Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991: 312) so aptly point out, "speeding up acquisition is extremely important for teachers and learners". Indeed, such an effect would doubtless be welcome in any language classroom.

The *ultimate level of attainment* can be understood as the progress made by learners in the direction of the TL norm, and researchers have typically operationalized it as the degree of advancement further down *markedness* hierarchies, where markedness is more or less equated with infrequency or distinctiveness.<sup>3</sup> On the whole, FFI studies of this kind have found a considerable advantage for instructed learners who acquire not only the more marked features taught but also the less marked aspects in implicational hierarchies. By contrast, untutored learners or students in purely meaning-focused programs may never gain access to the marked forms and only manage to acquire the unmarked elements in a particular system hierarchy (cf. Doughty 2003). A major piece of research in this area was carried out by Pavesi (1986), who compared relative clause formation in Italian high school EFL learners and uninstructed Italian workers in Scotland. Although the learning context did not influence the sequence of acquisition (see Chapter Two, section 2.2.5.), she found that not only did the former outperform the latter, but also moved further toward the more marked end of

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<sup>3</sup> Although the concept of markedness is complex and has been defined in different ways, it is most often used to refer to language forms that are exceptional, less common or frequent. We can talk about *classical markedness* in which case certain linguistic features are either *marked* or *unmarked* (e.g. singular nouns in English are unmarked whereas plural nouns with an '-s' ending are marked) or *markedness within the framework of language typology*, where it is a relative phenomenon with some forms being *more marked* or *less marked*. Implicational universals also presuppose a markedness relationship between features as well as different degrees of markedness. Yet another definition can be offered within the UG framework. In this case, the degree of markedness depends of whether a particular form is a *core feature* or a *peripheral feature*. While the former is considered unmarked because it is governed by UG and requires only minimal positive evidence, the latter is not so constrained, with the effect that more exposure and perhaps the provision of negative evidence is necessary if acquisition is to take place (cf. Ellis 1994; Johnson 1996).

Comrie and Keenan's (1978) Accessibility Hierarchy, and committed more advanced errors (e.g. fewer cases of noun retention and more resumptive pronoun copies).

The finding reported above is supported by experimental research designs focusing on specific functions of relative pronouns, as evidenced by the so-called *projection studies* such as those conducted by Gass (1982), Eckman, Bell and Nelson (1988) or Jones (1992). The researchers showed that instruction targeting the function of the object of preposition (e.g. 'This is the house we hid behind') resulted in the acquisition of the less marked functions of the subject, direct and indirect object, as measured by the subjects' written production, while the outcomes of teaching the less marked functions first were limited. Also relevant to our discussion are the experiments carried out by Zobl (1985) which focused on the acquisition of different uses of English possessive adjectives by native-speakers of French. In keeping with the results of other research of this kind, he found that the students who had been taught the use of possessives in the human domain (e.g. 'her sister'), which is the more marked structure, performed better on this feature as well as the less marked use of possessives with inanimate entities (e.g. 'his tent'), while the reverse did not occur. Still limited in scope as they are, such findings provide compelling evidence for the effectiveness of FFI in triggering the acquisition processes and helping learners overcome the limitations of sheer exposure. As Larsen-Freeman and Long comment, "It could be that the preponderance of unmarked data that naturalistic acquirers [but also learners in purely experiential classrooms!] encounter not only slows them down, but also leads to simplifications in the grammars before full target competence is attained, i.e. to premature fossilization" (1991: 321).<sup>4</sup>

### 3.2.3. The effect of form-focused instruction on production accuracy

The inevitable methodological problems involved in making comparisons between instructed and uninstructed learners and the

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<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that the results of projection studies are at odds with the claims of Pienemann's (1985) Teachability Hypothesis, a point that will be dealt with later in this chapter.

resulting inconclusive outcomes of such studies have prompted researchers to channel their efforts into determining the impact of pedagogic intervention on the acquisition of specific linguistic features and, more recently, investigating the relative value of different types of FFI. Since, as mentioned above, the findings in the latter area will be reported in Chapter Four, at this point we will mostly be concerned with the effect of instruction on the accuracy with which particular structures are produced, even though several type-of-instruction studies will also be invoked in order to lend support to the claims made.

Regardless of the exact category a particular study represents, two issues appear to be of pivotal importance, namely the type of TL knowledge developed and the permanence of improvement. The durability of instruction will be dealt with in the following section, and, therefore, here, the emphasis will be placed on the extent to which the subjects' ability to produce a specific feature accurately is evaluated by means of measurements that allow for planning and monitoring (e.g. fill-in-the-gap exercises) or such that call for unplanned, meaning-focused language use (e.g. a story-telling task). This distinction is crucial since, whereas the former enable the application of explicit, declarative knowledge, the latter require learners to draw upon their implicit, procedural knowledge (see section 3.3. below). As Ellis (2005a: 214) explains, "(...) it is implicit knowledge that underlies the ability to communicate fluently and confidently in an L2", which implies that not only should this system be the primary aim of intervention, but also that free production constitutes the most valid indicator of L2 competence and, as such, should be included in any measurements of the effects of FFI.

There are quite a few empirical investigations which failed to show a positive effect for instruction, operationalized as a certain amount of practice targeting specific grammatical forms, on production accuracy. One such study was carried out by Ellis (1984b) who showed that three hours of instruction directed at 'wh-' questions did not enable child ESL learners to produce the structure more accurately in a communicative game. In a more recent research project, Ellis (1992c) found that the differences in the amount of practice 15 beginner learners of L2 German had been supplied with over a period of six months could not account for the divergences in the accuracy with which they produced utterances necessitating

the application of the verb-end rule in spontaneous speech. The failure of FFI to affect production accuracy in unplanned language use was also reported by Kadia (1988) for the placement of pronominal direct objects (e.g. 'Last time I show Beth it') and Schumann (1978) in the case of English negatives. The main reason for the ineffectiveness of pedagogic intervention in all of these studies appears to be that it was directed at structures far ahead of the learners' stage of development. As will be recalled from section 2.2.5. in Chapter Two, some studies have also shown that instruction may result in *pseudo-learning*, with its effects wearing off after some time (e.g. Lightbown 1983), or even have a deleterious effect (e.g. Eubank 1987).

Discouraging as such findings may be, there is a rapidly expanding body of research indicating that form-focused instruction does result in enhanced accuracy. In their synthesis and statistical meta-analysis of the findings of experimental and quasi-experimental investigations into the effectiveness of FFI, Norris and Ortega (2000, 2001) compared the pretest and posttest values for individual treatments used in a sample of 49 studies, and concluded that "(...) L2 instruction can be characterized as effective in its own right, at least as operationalized and measured within the domain" (2001: 192). Although an in-depth review of even a tiny percentage of this research is beyond the scope of the present work, it appears warranted to take a look at two such studies. White (1991), for example, explored the effect of FFI on helping francophone learners of English eliminate the persistent error of placing adverbs between the verb and its object, and, on the other hand, use such forms between the subject and the verb, the kind of placement that is proscribed in French (see section 3.1.2. above). It turned out that, after a two-week treatment period, the experimental subjects outperformed the controls, manifesting significant gains for both features. In another study, which involved the same group of subjects, White et al. (1991) set out to investigate the impact of FFI on the accuracy of formation of 'wh-' and 'yes/no' questions. After five hours of instruction spread over two weeks, the experimental group improved considerably in their use of inversion on different tasks.

Unambiguously positive effects of instruction have also been observed in more recent empirical investigations which were not included in Norris and Ortega's (2000) meta-analysis. This is

reflected, for instance, in the studies by Ayoun (2004) and Benati (2005), which are, in fact, manifestations of type-of-instruction research, but are directly relevant to the present discussion. While the former showed that written recasts aided English-speaking university students improve in the frequency and accuracy of use of aspectual distinctions in French, the latter demonstrated that input processing, traditional and meaning-based output instruction all enabled the Chinese and Greek subjects to become more accurate in their use of the English past simple tense (see Chapter Four for a description of the instructional options utilized in these studies).

For reasons spelled out at the beginning of this section, of particular significance are studies which seek to measure the acquisition of a specific TL form not only in terms of performance on highly controlled activities, but also on tasks eliciting spontaneous language use and thus tapping implicit knowledge. Due to considerable difficulty involved in designing communicative production tasks which would make the use of a target feature essential (cf. Loschky and Bley-Vroman 1993), such research is still relatively rare, as evident in the fact that Norris and Ortega (2000) located only 8 studies of this kind, which accounts for only 16% of those they considered. However, there seems to be a growing realization among SLA researchers that free production tasks provide a much more genuine picture of a learner's L2 competence than traditional grammar tests. In fact, the number of studies meeting such criteria has been on constant increase since the publication of Norris and Ortega's influential paper, and two years later Ellis (2002b) managed to identify five additional research projects of this kind. As can be seen from Table 3.2., which contains summaries of the studies that Ellis (2002b) included in his review and some very recent investigations that the present author has been able to track down in the current SLA literature, the employment of measures of learners' implicit L2 system is gradually becoming the norm. It should also be emphasized that four of these studies afford a *process* as well as a *product perspective*, which means that, apart from examining production accuracy, they offer insights into the stages of IL development, a feature which, according to Doughty (2003),

Study	Subjects	Treatment	Acquisition measure	Results
Harley (1989)	319 Grade 6 early French immersion students	8 weeks of analytic-functional materials directed at French <i>passé composé</i> and <i>imparfait</i>	(1) oral interview: Three questions eliciting use of <i>imparfait</i> (% error score); (2) written compositions (ratings of accuracy)	Difference between the experimental and control group scores significant on immediate posttests but non-significant on delayed posttest
Day and Shapson (1991)	315 Grade 7 early French immersion students	5-7 weeks of analytic-functional grammar materials targeting French hypothetical conditions	(1) oral interviews with prompts to rephrase more politely; (2) written composition with prompts (both scored for accuracy in obligatory contexts)	(1) On immediate posttest the difference significant in the written composition, but non-significant in the oral interview; (2) the same results for the delayed posttest
Lyster (1994)	106 Grade 8 early French immersion students	Explicit explanation, input highlighting and production practice in context targeting sociolinguistic expressions of politeness (particular emphasis on 'vous' - 'you')	(1) Oral production: role-played responses to slides depicting formal and informal situations; (2) written composition: formal letter	(1) Significant differences between the experimental and control group on both measures; (2) similar results on delayed posttests; results on oral production largely due to increased use of 'vous'
VanPatten and Sanz (1995)	44 third-semester university students of 1.2 Spanish	Two days of input processing instruction consisting of explicit explanation and structured input activities directed at preverbal object pronouns, word order	Storytelling task: subjects watched videos twice and then told the story; oral and written production	No statistically significant differences on the oral version of the story; experimental group significantly better on the written version
Salaberry (1997)	44 third-semester university students of	1.5 hours of input processing and production-based	Oral narrative based on 1-minute silent video clips	No significant differences between experimental and control group on

immediate and delayed posttests. Very small number of tokens of target structure.

Developmentally ready students who received intensive recasts showed significantly greater stage increase

Study 1: Differences between experimental and control groups insignificant; Study 2: Experimental groups scored significantly higher than control groups for adverb placement but not for direct object topicalization

The control group showed little improvement from pretest to posttest 2; the experimental group differed significantly from the control group on written and oral measures; gains in the experimental group largely maintained over time

instruction comprising explicit explanation, structured input activities and production practice

Subjects performed three information-gap tasks under two conditions: interaction with and without intensive recasts directed at English question forms

Study 1: A communication game that supplied subjects with recasts directed at Japanese adjectival ordering and locative construction; Study 2: Two communication games that supplied subjects with models and recasts targeting direct object topicalization and adverb placement

Feedback in the form of corrective recasts directed at English past tense during tasks which required subjects to produce oral and written science reports over the period of 4 weeks

L2 Spanish

35 adult ESL students

Study 1: 24 young adult learners of L2 Japanese; Study 2: 30 young adult third-semester Spanish students

34 middle school intermediate ESL students

Mackey and Philip (1997)

Long, Inagaki and Ortega (1997)

Doughry and Varela (1998)



Williams and Evans (1998)	11 adult ESL students at the intermediate level enrolled in writing classes	(1) Input flooding and (2) explicit instruction plus input flooding in context of survey tasks about cultural values; the target were English passive verb forms	Short written essay based on a series of five or six pictures designed to elicit passive forms administered 2 weeks after treatment; dictogloss task	None of the groups displayed any significant improvement in use of the passive in written essays or dictogloss task
Mackey (1999)	34 adult ESL learners	Subjects performed three information-gap tasks under two conditions: as interactors and noninteractors; the target structure were English question forms	Performance on information-gap tasks similar to those used for the treatment; analysis in terms of Plagemann's five developmental stages	(1) Interactors manifested significantly greater stage increase; (2) interactors produced more stage 4 and 5 questions; significant gains evident between pretest, posttests 2 and 3 but not posttest 1
Muranai (2000)	91 Japanese learners of English (first year college students)	Instruction lasted 1.5 hours and was directed at English definite and indefinite articles; (1) Input-output enhancement and formal debriefings (2) Input-output enhancement plus meaning-focused debriefing	(1) Oral story description task; silent movie scenes; (2) oral picture-description task; (3) written picture-description task	Two experimental groups outperformed control group on indefinite article in posttest 1, but only group receiving formal debriefing outperformed control group in posttest 2; on the definite article the formal debriefing group outperformed the control group but not the meaning-focused debriefing group in posttests 1 and 2; these findings hold for both speech and writing
Han (2002)	8 upper-intermediate adult learners in an intensive ESL course	Subjects took part in 8 sessions devoted to narration tasks based on cartoon strips; the experimental group was provided with recasts directed at errors which involved lack of tense consistency in English	Performance on oral and written narration tasks similar to those used for the treatment.	The experimental group manifested greater tense consistency on immediate and delayed posttests than the control group on both oral and written measure; treatment also heightened the experimental subjects' awareness of tense consistency as measured by the amount of self-correction

Erlam (2003b)	69 learners of French aged 14 in a secondary school in New Zealand (after two years of instruction in French)	Instructional treatment was applied during three 45-minute lessons over the period of one week and it was directed at direct object pronouns in French; it took the form of (1) rule presentation, metalinguistic information, production practice and corrective feedback (deductive) and (2) input- and output-based practice, discussion of responses, scant metalinguage use	(1) Oral production test involving narration of a short sequence of pictures (2) written production test on which statements had to be rewritten using direct pronouns in response to questions; both tests were scored in terms of attempted, correct and accurately placed pronoun forms	The deductive group outperformed the control group on oral and written production tasks, but the improvement declined from immediate to delayed posttest; this was not the case for the inductive group; difficulty in tapping implicit knowledge emphasized; little data generated and a lot of individual variation on delayed posttest also reported
Pawlak (2003a)	35 Polish intermediate EFL students in the third year of senior high school	Four 20-minute treatment sessions of targeting the 3rd person singular '-s'; the subjects worked in pairs and talked about a typical day of a professional; during the feedback session a combination of requests for clarification and recasts was used when the morpheme was not supplied	Oral task similar to this used in the treatment in which students described a typical day of a family member; this was followed by a written composition in which subjects wrote down what they had said; the performance was scored in terms of correct use in obligatory contexts, use in other contexts and self-correction	Although the experimental group was less accurate on the pretest, it outperformed the control group on posttests 1, 2 and 3; on the oral task it gained in accuracy on each posttest; on the written task it improved on posttest 1 but deteriorated slightly on posttests 2 and 3; a lot of inter- and intra-learner variation was observed; some evidence for item- rather than system learning present; the number of overgeneralization errors increased
Ishida (2004)	4 students at a university in the US taking a 4th or 5th	Eight 30-minute one-on-one conversation sessions with an L1 Japanese-speaking	A time-series design was used and there was ongoing assessment of learners'	The overall accuracy in the use of the targeted forms increased during the treatment period and was retained on immediate and

semester Japanese language course	interlocutor (2 sessions per week); recasts were provided on the incorrect use of the Japanese aspectual form <i>te i-(ru)</i> as well as some other lexical and grammatical items	progress; the first two sessions served as pretests, the last two as posttests; 7 weeks later a delayed posttest took place but only two of the subjects participated; type counts of accuracy employed	delayed posttests; a relationship was found between the number of recasts used and the magnitude of the positive effect; the implicit intervention directed at one aspectual meaning was not carried over into other aspectual categories
Lyster (2004)	179 Grade 5 students in an early French immersion program	Three groups received five weeks of form-focused instruction in grammatical gender assignment in French which involved input enhancement, rule discovery and direct explanation as well as analysis- and fluency-based practice activities; in two groups either recasts or prompts were additionally employed	All the three experimental groups outperformed the comparison group where subject-matter instruction took place on all the measures on both immediate and delayed posttest; the gains decreased over time but, in all cases, there was a marked improvement in comparison with the pretest; the case for system learning rather than item learning made; the possibility of task effect in the experimental groups raised

Table 3.2. Summaries of FFI studies using measures of acquisition based on free production (based on Ellis 2002b: 226-228 and the author's review of latest research).

should be an integral element of SLA research. Arguably, such developments augur well for the ability of future FFI studies to provide more definitive answers to unresolved questions.<sup>5</sup>

What is far more important, however, the findings of as many as 12 (75%) of the 16 studies demonstrate that FFI contributed to accuracy gains in tasks requiring spontaneous production of the TL feature, even though some types of pedagogic intervention might have proven more successful than others.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, in all the ten instances where instruction resulted in improved production accuracy on an oral measure of free production, it invariably exerted a positive effect on the performance in the written test, but the reverse relationship did not hold in the study conducted by Day and Shapson (1991). On a more cautionary note, it should be pointed out that while form-focused instruction always worked in the case of young learners and it proved to be successful whenever it targeted a morphological or formulaic feature, the findings are much more mixed when it comes to different aspects of syntax. Also, no data are available as to whether instruction works for implicit knowledge in the case of beginners, which stems from the still insuperable problem of setting up appropriate tasks for this group (cf. Ellis 2002b). Besides, since there is typically no data concerning the quality of learner output, particularly in terms of fluency, there is still a remote possibility that, in some cases, the subjects fell back on their conscious rule knowledge, a point that Krashen has a penchant for bringing up to discount the findings of most FFI research (e.g. Krashen 2003). After all, if learners do in fact draw upon what they consciously know when performing a task, they engage in the kind of monitoring that the Monitor Model predicts.

Despite such methodological problems, there exists copious evidence for the beneficial effects of FFI on the production accu-

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<sup>5</sup> No claim is being made that all the relevant studies published to date have been considered in this review as it only includes those which the author has been able to access in the leading journals in the field. It should also be noted that many of the studies in Table 3.2. primarily aimed at determining the relative effectiveness of various instructional options rather than FFI *per se*. Nonetheless, they provide compelling evidence that such intervention can have a beneficial impact on production accuracy.

<sup>6</sup> It should be clarified that some of the studies also included more controlled production measures, but these are not reported here because of the focus of the analysis.

racy of the linguistic features at which it is directed, and more and more data are being accumulated in support of this position. Obviously, its success is not inevitable and its effectiveness is likely to be contingent on a number of factors, such as learners' age, proficiency level and developmental readiness as well as the inherent properties of the structure being targeted or the intensity and type of pedagogic intervention (see Chapter Four). As Ellis (1997: 60) comments, "There is sufficient evidence to show that form-focused instruction can result in definite gains in accuracy. If the structure is simple in the sense that it does not involve complex processing operations and is clearly related to a specific function and if the form-focused instruction is extensive and well-planned it is likely to work". Of course, when people set about studying a foreign language, they wish to retain what they are taught in the classroom as, otherwise, there would be little return on the frequently substantial investment of time, effort or money. Thus, demonstrating that formal instruction is beneficial would be of little value if it could not be shown that its contributions are still robust even after a considerable amount of time has elapsed, and it is this crucial issue to which we now turn.

### 3.2.5. The durability of form-focused instruction

The ultimate test of the utility of FFI lies in how permanent its effects eventually turn out to be. As most teachers would probably attest, it is a truly harrowing experience to discover that although students seem to have mastered a grammatical feature following intensive practice and some of them even apply it accurately in spontaneous speech, after a month or two the gains are largely lost and the apparently eradicated errors begin to reemerge at a staggering pace. In fact, such a scenario is frequently the case because "as time passes the effects may gradually atrophy and the learners return to similar levels of performance to those observed before the instruction" (Ellis 1994: 636). For this reason, it has recently become a standard research procedure not only to gauge the levels of accuracy in the use of the target feature immediately after the treatment, but also to repeat the measurement once or twice several weeks, or perhaps even months, later, a practice that is known as *delayed posttesting*. Nevertheless, Norris and Ortega (2000) report that among the studies they reviewed only 47% employed

delayed posttests and just 17% used a third posttest after a longer period of time, which is regrettable since, this being the case, there is no way of determining whether the reported gains were durable or short-lived. They also found that delayed posttests were administered an average of four weeks after the treatment and third follow-up posttests an average of twelve weeks. Although this may not seem to be long enough for confident claims of permanence to be made, the inclusion of such measures does throw some light on this issue.

The results of a number of studies provide evidence that any effect of instruction may be temporary and disappear for the most part some time after the treatment, thus casting serious doubt on its overall utility. Lightbown, Spada and Wallace (1980), for example, found that reviewing the functions of the '-s' morpheme, the copula 'be' and locative prepositions such as 'to' enabled French-speaking learners to improve their accuracy scores on a grammaticality judgment test administered immediately after the treatment but half of the gain fell away on a follow-up test 5 months later. The absence of a long-lasting effect of pedagogic intervention has also been reported by Lightbown (1983) for the progressive '-ing' marker, Pienemann (1985) for the English copula as well as White (1991) for adverb positioning in English. On the face of it, then, it would seem that there is a marked tendency for instructional effects to wear off after some time, which bodes ill for teachers who believe that their explanations or the more or less controlled practice activities they set up will benefit learners in the long run.

If we look at the bigger picture, however, and especially if we examine the findings of more recent studies, it becomes clear that there are no grounds for such pessimism since there is mounting evidence that not only is FFI successful in the short term, but also that accuracy gains are likely to survive far beyond several weeks or even months. As Norris and Ortega (2001: 202) point out, "The effects of L2 instruction appear to be durable. This can be concluded from the cumulative empirical observation that, although such effects tend to marginally decrease over time (...) it is the case that average effect sizes for delayed posttests remain relatively large, indicating sustained differences in favor of instructed groups". Clearly, in view of the fact that the relevant studies included in Norris and Ortega's meta-analysis were few and far between, such an overly optimistic pronouncement would have to be viewed with

circumspection if only this evidence were to be taken into consideration. However, as the summaries presented in Table 3.2. demonstrate, the impact of pedagogic intervention does not easily fade away even in the case of implicit knowledge of TL forms, and it stands to reason that the same pattern obtains for conscious, declarative knowledge. On an even more optimistic note, the findings of some empirical investigations (Mackey 1999; Muranoi 2000; Pawlak 2003a) indicate that, in some situations, instructional gains are not only maintained but actually gain in magnitude from immediate to delayed posttests, which suggests that FFI may act as a catalyst for longer-term interlanguage change.

Comforting as this possibility might be, it has to be noted that, as was the case with production accuracy as such, whether or not the effects of instruction are durable hinges on a number of factors. These include the continued presence of the target feature in classroom input, opportunities to use it in meaningful communication or, once again, learners' developmental readiness (cf. Lightbown 1992; Ellis 1994). It is equally likely that students' perceptions may to some extent determine the durability of FFI, since, if they only wish to develop successful communicative ability, they may attach little importance to such semantically redundant morphological features as past tense '-ed' or subtle aspectual distinctions between grammatical tenses. In contrast, when learners' aim is near native-like communicative competence because they want to get a lucrative job with a huge British or American company or pass entrance or final examinations in a foreign languages department, they may go to great lengths to preserve what they have been taught even if this entails signing up for extra courses or hours of tedious individual practice at home. As Ellis (1994: 638) explains, "(...) the durability of instructional effects is closely linked to the nature of the learner's motivation (...) the learner needs both to be able to perceive structures in the input and also requires a reason for remembering them".

### 3.3. Theoretical perspectives on the facilitative effect of form-focused instruction

Having discussed a range of arguments pointing to the limitations of purely meaning-centered approaches as well as the research findings

demonstrating that, when certain conditions are fulfilled, FFI can have a beneficial and durable effect on classroom language learning, we now proceed to present a number of theoretical positions which provide support for different forms of pedagogical intervention. However, before the tenets of different theories and hypotheses are outlined and their pedagogical implications are explored, it appears necessary to elucidate several key concepts the employment of which is indispensable in the subsequent discussion. In particular, in view of the conceptual and terminological confusion in the SLA literature, there is a need to define and distinguish between such pairs of contrasting terms as *implicit* and *explicit knowledge*, *implicit* and *explicit learning*, *implicit* and *explicit instruction*, *inductive* and *deductive learning*, and *incidental* and *intentional learning*. Since, in doing so, the author aims to set the scene for the presentation of theoretical perspectives which are pertinent to the central theme of the present chapter rather than resolve the long-standing controversies surrounding these constructs, the examination thereof will only be cursory, and the interested reader is referred to in-depth reviews of such issues that can be found in DeKeyser (2003), Robinson (2003), Ellis (2004b, 2005b) or Hulstijn (2005).

### *Implicit and explicit knowledge*

A crucial distinction in the field of SLA that is relevant for researchers and methodologists alike is that between *implicit* and *explicit knowledge* of the target language, which roughly corresponds to Krashen's differentiation between *acquisition* and *learning*. As illustrated in Table 3.3., *implicit knowledge* is entirely tacit and unconscious, it is not available for self-report until an explicit formal representation has been formed, it is variable but systematic, and the learners' ability to acquire it is subject to age-related limitations as well as the kind of processing constraints imposed by the Multidimensional Model (see 3.3.2. below). It comprises both loosely linked formulaic expressions and abstract grammar rules, it is procedural and can be accessed effortlessly and rapidly, with the effect that it can be employed in fluent, spontaneous L2 performance (cf. Ellis 2005a, 2005b; Hulstijn 2005). By contrast, *explicit knowledge* can be defined as "the declarative and often anomalous knowledge of the phonological, lexical, grammatical, pragmatic, and sociocritical features of an L2 together with metalanguage for



labeling this knowledge" (Ellis 2004b: 244-245). This type of knowledge comprises facts about the second language both in the form of exemplars and often imprecise or inaccurate grammar rules, it is held consciously and is usually accessible through controlled processing. Moreover, it is naturally exploited when the language task poses considerable difficulty to the learner and it can be verbalized, even though the explanations provided can be couched in non-technical terms rather than extensive metalanguage. Explicit knowledge can grow in breadth (i.e. more facts about the TL are accumulated) as well as in depth (i.e. it becomes more accurate and precise, and is more consistently applied), and it can be learned at any age, since it is constrained by the cognitive complexity of the material and learners' analytic skills rather than developmental stages.

Characteristics	Implicit knowledge	Explicit knowledge
Awareness	Intuitive awareness of linguistic norms	Conscious awareness of linguistic norms
Type of knowledge	Procedural knowledge of rules and fragments	Declarative knowledge of rules and fragments
Systematicity	Variable but systematic knowledge	Anomalous and inconsistent knowledge
Accessibility	Access to knowledge by means of automatic processing	Access to knowledge by means of controlled processing
Use of L2 knowledge	Access to knowledge during fluent performance	Access to knowledge during planning difficulty
Self-report	Nonverbalizable	Verbalizable
Learnability	Potentially only within critical period	Any age

*Table 3.3. Characteristics of implicit and explicit knowledge (Ellis 2005b: 151).*

The extent to which explicit and implicit knowledge are two distinct forms of mental representation as well as the possibility of one being converted into the other remain highly contentious issues. On the one hand, there is neurological evidence that although both explicit knowledge and implicit knowledge reside in various regions

of the tertiary cortex, only the former involves the operation of the limbic system (e.g. Paradis 1994; Ullman 2004). In SLA literature, the two types of knowledge are viewed as separate at the level of representation not only by Krashen (1981a) but also by N. Ellis (2003, 2005). On the other hand, psychologists such as Dienes and Perner (1999) and SLA researchers such as Schmidt (1994) view them as continuous rather than dichotomous. Moreover, although there is broad consensus among applied linguists of different persuasions that the success of L2 acquisition is contingent on the development of implicit knowledge, they are at odds with regard to how this process occurs as well as the potential contributions of explicit representation. While UG-based theorists such as Gregg (2001) ascribe no role to conscious, analyzed information, SLA researchers working within the cognitive framework have tended to adopt three distinct perspectives on this issue (cf. Ellis 2005b):

- the *non-interface position*, which is advocated by Krashen (1981a), Schwartz (1993) or Hulstijn (2002), and posits that not only are the two types of knowledge separate and accessed by distinct processes but also cannot convert into each other;
- the *strong interface position*, first proposed by Sharwood-Smith (1981) and later endorsed by researchers like Johnson (1996) and DeKeyser (1998, 2001), which holds that a change can occur in both directions, including conscious, analyzed, declarative rules transforming directly into implicit knowledge;
- the *weak interface position*, which states that although the conversion of explicit into implicit representation is possible, this process does not apply across the board and is restricted in some ways; accordingly, FFI can effect such a change when (1) learners have reached the requisite developmental stage to incorporate a given feature into their interlanguages (Ellis 1997), (2) explicit knowledge of TL forms can indirectly foster the growth of implicit knowledge as "the input to our connectionist implicit learning system comes via unitized explicit representations forged from prior attended processing" (N. Ellis 2005: 340), or (3) learners' utterances generated by the explicit system can be fed into the implicit system as *auto-input* (Schmidt and Frota 1986).

There is more agreement as to whether explicit knowledge can be employed in language use, but, even here, some researchers believe that it can only edit the utterances produced by the acquired system (e.g. Krashen 1981a), whereas others (e.g. DeKeyser 2001) suggest that some learners can access and deploy it in spontaneous performance provided they have ample time and opportunities for on-line planning (cf. Yuan and Ellis 2003).

### *Implicit and explicit learning*

The processes by which implicit and explicit knowledge are developed are inextricably interwoven with the concepts of *implicit* and *explicit learning*, which probably generate the most controversy of all the notions dealt with here. While explicit learning can be defined as "input processing with the conscious intention to find out whether the input information contains regularities and, if so, work out the concepts and rules with which these regularities can be captured", implicit learning involves "input processing without such an intention, taking place unconsciously" (Hulstijn 2005: 131). Although it could simply be stated that the former is employed when learning explicit knowledge and the latter when developing implicit knowledge, in reality, the utility of a particular learning mode is a function of the regularity and complexity of the system that underlies the data, the frequency and salience with which this regularity manifests itself in the input as well as the differences in learners' knowledge, cognitive ability (i.e. their IQ, aptitude, working memory, etc.), skills or information processing styles (N. Ellis 2005; Robinson 2005). Hulstijn (2005) suggests that, since in any natural grammar there exists competition between abstract rules and exemplars, and linguistic cognition is both symbolic and subsymbolic, there is a need for both explicit and implicit learning. However, he appears to attach more importance to the latter as allowing induction of abstract regularities and mastery of concrete co-occurrence patterns. In contrast, DeKeyser (2003) argues that awareness is indispensable when it comes to the acquisition of abstract patterns such as language rules because the role of implicit learning is limited in this respect. Thus, in his view, initial stages of L2 acquisition should mainly involve explicit processing.

### *Implicit and explicit instruction*

The degree of awareness is also the main distinguishing feature in the case of *implicit* and *explicit instruction*, with the former avoiding a direct focus on the language system and the latter supplying learners with information about the rules underlying the input. It should be emphasized, however, that there can be different degrees of explicitness and implicitness, and, thus, explicit and implicit teaching should be viewed in terms of a continuum rather than a dichotomy and cannot be equated with *form-focused* and *meaning-focused instruction*, respectively. Understood in this way, the difference between the two approaches may lie, for example, in the extent to which attention to specific linguistic features intrudes into the processing of meaning. Consequently, to quote the definitions provided by Doughty and Williams, while in the case of explicit instruction "the aim is to *direct* learner attention and to *exploit pedagogical grammar* (...)", implicit instruction is intended "to *attract* learner attention and to avoid metalinguistic discussion, always *minimizing any interruption* to the communication of meaning" [emphases original] (1998c: 232).

### *Inductive and deductive learning*

A distinction also has to be drawn between *inductive learning*, in which learners are given examples and requested to discover the underlying patterns, and *deductive learning*, where the presentation of rules precedes the provision of examples. Since, in both cases, the correct rule is stated at some point either by the teacher or by the learners, they are an integral part of explicit instruction.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> In some sources, the terms *inductive* and *deductive* appear to be equated with the terms *implicit* and *explicit*, respectively, which undoubtedly aggravates the terminological confusion in the field. In addition, DeKeyser (2003) argues that not only explicit but also implicit learning can be viewed as deductive or inductive. Learning is inductive and implicit when children subconsciously acquire their L1 from exposure, and it can be deductive and implicit when parameter settings enable them to subconsciously derive a number of characteristics without having to infer them from the input data.

### *Incidental and intentional learning*

As regards the last pair of concepts mentioned above, according to Hulstijn (2005: 132), "Intentional learning refers to the learning mode in which participants are informed, prior to their engagement in a learning task, that they will be tested afterward on their retention of a particular type of information. Incidental learning refers to the mode in which participants are not forewarned of an upcoming retention test (...)".

The necessarily brief and selective as the discussion of relevant terminology may be, it provides a useful overview of the constructs frequently referred to in providing theoretical accounts of L2 acquisition, and serves as a useful starting point for the presentation of the theories and hypotheses recognizing the facilitative effects of FFI. The following sections will concentrate on outlining the central tenets of such theoretical models as Skill-Learning Theory (Johnson 1996; DeKeyser 1998), the Multidimensional Model together with the Teachability Hypothesis (Pienemann 1985, 1989), the Noticing Hypothesis (Schmidt 1990, 1994), the Delayed-Effect Hypothesis (Lightbown 1985, 1992), Input Processing Theory (VanPatten 1996), Interaction-Based Theories (Swain 1995; Long 1996; Lantolf 2000b, 2006), connectionist perspectives (N. Ellis 2002) and the Dual-Mode System Hypothesis (Skehan 1998). Admittedly, the models sometimes represent very different theoretical perspectives (e.g. emphasis on internal and cognitive vs. social and contextual dimensions of language acquisition and use), scope (e.g. postulating delayed effects of learning is a more modest claim than insisting that most effective learning has to involve awareness), and their emphasis on a specific aspect of acquisition (e.g. while the Multidimensional Model stresses the relationship between TL knowledge and output, Skill-Building Theory is primarily concerned with the manner in which this knowledge is represented in the learner's mind). However, what all of them have in common is that they see a more or less important role for FFI, even though they might differ in their views on the value of explicit knowledge and, consequently, the utility of different instructional options.

Although each position will briefly be evaluated, no attempt will be made to prove the superiority of any one of them since they are still being hotly debated at the theoretical level, and the findings

of studies conducted to date are so contradictory and inconclusive that the settlement of the existing controversies is nowhere in sight. Instead, the main emphasis will be laid on expounding the role the models envisage for form-focused instruction as well as the types of intervention their proponents deem most advantageous. Apart from being vital in and of itself, the discussion of such issues will serve as a useful introduction to the description of a comprehensive theory of instructed language learning that will be offered in the last section of the present chapter.

### 3.3.1. Skill-Learning Theory

Although, chronologically speaking, Skill-Learning Theory is a relative newcomer to the field of SLA and its development came after most of the theoretical positions discussed in this section, it appears reasonable to discuss it at the very outset, as it is perhaps the best-known manifestation of the strong interface position and, as such, it views explicit grammar teaching as central to the process of instructed language learning. The theory has been derived from Anderson's (1983, 1995) Adaptive Control of Thought (ACT) Model which, together with McLaughlin's (1990b) Information Processing Theory, constitute prime examples of skill-learning models of L2 acquisition. As for its applications to language pedagogy, they have mainly been explored by Johnson (1996) and DeKeyser (1998, 2001).

Skill-Building Theory equates language learning with the learning of any other complex skill, such as playing the piano or driving a car, and holds that it is an intentional process which requires attention and effort, and initially involves the development of *declarative knowledge* (i.e. knowledge *that*), a rough equivalent of what has been referred to above as explicit knowledge. Since this type of knowledge is factual, slow, and its application places heavy demands on a learner's *channel capacity*, fluent and efficient performance is only possible when it is converted, by dint of practice, into *procedural knowledge* (i.e. knowledge *how*), which corresponds to the implicit system.<sup>8</sup> Procedural knowledge "consists of condition-action

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<sup>8</sup> Although the terms *explicit/implicit* and *declarative/procedural* are not entirely synonymous, they tend to be used interchangeably in the literature (e.g. Anderson 1995; DeKeyser 1998).

pairs that state what is to be done under certain circumstances or with certain data" (DeKeyser 1998: 48-49), it is fast and its utilization requires little conscious attention thanks to which more channel capacity is left available to higher-level skills such as further action planning.<sup>9</sup>

According to Anderson (1995), the move from declarative to procedural knowledge involves three stages, the *declarative stage*, the *proceduralization stage* and the *automatizing stage*.<sup>10</sup> To use a linguistic example, in the *declarative stage*, a learner may know that in order to create a sentence in the present perfect tense, it is necessary to combine the auxiliary 'have' or 'has' with the regular or irregular past participle, but is unable to use the structure correctly in spontaneous conversation and may even experience difficulty applying it in controlled exercises. As the learner engages in the target behavior using the inefficient declarative knowledge, *proceduralization* begins, where the initial knowledge is restructured, with the effect that distinct co-occurring items are combined into larger chunks and, consequently, the working memory load is reduced. In the case of the present perfect, this might entail the realization that, for instance, the forms 'has gone', 'have washed', 'has played' or 'have written' represent the application of the same rule and it is more economical to include them in one production set. Finally, in the last step, further practice (of a different kind, though) is required to strengthen, fine-tune and *automatize* the newly acquired procedural knowledge, "which increases speed and reduces the error rate and the demand on cognitive resources" (DeKeyser 1998: 49). This

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<sup>9</sup> Clearly, both this and other theories and hypotheses discussed in the present chapter draw upon a *single-capacity model* of attention such as the one proposed by Kahneman (1973). However, there also exist *multiple-resource* (e.g. Wickens 1992) and *interference models* (e.g. Gopher 1992), which has prompted researchers such as Robinson (2003: 646) to argue that "invoking limits on *undifferentiated* [emphasis original] attention capacity as an explanation of various SLA processes (...) is unsatisfactory". Still, most SLA researchers continue to work with the notion of attention as a unitary, limited capacity and this is the position adopted in this work. In fact, as Skehan and Foster (2001) explain, the multiple-resource view can be more applicable to explaining the performance of native speakers who use language resources that are very different from those available to learners.

<sup>10</sup> Alternative terms for the three stages are *cognitive*, *associative* and *autonomous*, respectively (cf. Mitchell and Myles 1998).

means that the learner further modifies the production set by, for example, distinguishing between different categories of grammatical persons, different verb categories, and different uses, but, also, that the activation procedures become faster and faster, which enables him to deploy the structure accurately in unplanned speech. As for the verbalizable declarative knowledge, it can either disappear entirely, or remain accessible because, as is the case with language teachers and their learners, the rules are invoked on many occasions both in the classroom and beyond.

Two important qualifications are in order at this point. For one thing, in response to widespread criticism and the available empirical evidence, the proponents of skill-learning models now admit that the acquisition of some aspects of the L2 involves implicit learning and allow for initial procedural representation (cf. Anderson and Fincham 1994; DeKeyser 1998). Secondly, the so-called *item-based theories* (e.g. Schneider and Detweiler 1988) extend information processing models to the acquisition of patterned sequences or lexical units, the employment of which gradually becomes automatic and is largely responsible for fluency in spontaneous language production, an issue that will be revisited later in this chapter (cf. Wray 2002; Larsen-Freeman 2003).

Perhaps the most comprehensive and far-reaching attempt to relate the skill-learning model to classroom language learning has been undertaken by Johnson (1996), who believes that form-focused and meaning-focused instruction are two viable pathways to developing implicit TL knowledge and they should be skillfully combined to enhance the effectiveness of acquisition. He distinguishes between what he refers to as *DECPRO*, or *proceduralization*, which roughly mirrors the three-stage sequence outlined above but stresses the importance of maintaining the initial declarative representation, and *PRODEC*, or *declarativization*, which accounts for how implicit knowledge is acquired from communicative exposure and serves as a basis for the development of accompanying explicit representation. In his view, while the latter process can be assisted by means of language-awareness activities, the former can be facilitated through the utilization the *ra-1* formula, or "(...) the strategy where we consistently put learners in a position where they have less attention available (one unit less, as it were) than they actually need to perform a task with comfort" (1996: 139). In practice, this entails setting up tasks where such variables as the



degree of form focus, time constraints or cognitive complexity are manipulated with the aim of influencing the amount of attention learners direct at a specific linguistic feature.

A more recent application has been proposed by DeKeyser (1998, 2001), who focuses on the characteristics of successful practice as well as the sequencing of learning activities in a lesson and the syllabus. He dismisses the value of mechanical drills in creating form-meaning relationships and argues, among other things, that the development of the initial declarative and subsequent procedural representation requires the use of rather traditional sentence-combining, fill-in-the-gap or translation exercises where there is no time pressure. As for the process of automatization, it calls for communicative practice in which real meanings are conveyed with the help of the consciously held rules and, at later stages, it can be facilitated by the application of communicative tasks allowing increasingly more focus on meaning. DeKeyser makes it very clear, however, that both explicit and implicit learning may be required for different L2 rules, and that their relative effectiveness may be a function of the characteristics of the learners and particular instructional settings. As he comments, in view of the scant empirical evidence, "it would be premature to try to design an entire teaching methodology on the principles outlined here" (1998: 62). Even though these caveats have to be kept in mind, Skill-Learning Theory provides a plausible theoretical justification for explicit FFI, as exemplified by the traditional PPP procedure, directed not only at language rules but also patterned sequences underlying fluent TL performance.

### 3.3.2. Multidimensional Model and Teachability Hypothesis

The Multidimensional Model, more recently known as Processability Theory (Pienemann 1998), originated in response to the findings of the so-called ZISA project which investigated the naturalistic acquisition of German and English as well as studies exploring the effect of formal instruction on the acquisition of specific grammatical features (e.g. Clahsen and Muysken 1986; Johnston and Pienemann 1986; Pienemann 1989). The results of such research demonstrated that there exist predictable developmental sequences in the acquisition of German word order or English interrogatives, and provided a basis for proposing a general pattern of language

development. The acquisition of such *developmental features* is believed to necessarily involve cumulative progression through six stages, with each of them requiring a greater degree of analysis and greater capacity to manipulate the constituents in the emerging structure. As can be seen in Table 3.4., which depicts the processing operations involved in the acquisition of grammatical rules in English, learners at Stage 1 rely on non-linguistic processing devices and can only generate unanalyzed chunks of language which cannot be manipulated and adapted to different situations. As learners advance to Stage 2, they develop the ability to create utterances with transparent meanings involving simple word order (S-V-O), and

Stage	Processing operation	Linguistic realization
1	Production relies on non-linguistic processing devices. Learner has no knowledge of syntactic categories.	Undifferentiated lexical items; formulas such as 'I don't know' and 'I can it'.
2	Production of simple strings of elements based on meaning or information focus. Learner still has no knowledge of syntactic categories.	Canonical word order; intonation questions such as 'You playing chess?'
3	Learner is able to identify the beginning and end of a string to perform operations on an element in these positions, e.g. learner can shift an element from beginning to end of string and vice versa. These operations are still pre-syntactic.	Adverb-preposing (e.g. 'Today I play football'); 'do'-fronting (e.g. 'Do you play football?'); neg. + V (e.g. 'No play football').
4	Learner is able to identify an element within a string and to move this element from the middle of the string to either the beginning or end. This operation is again characterized as pre-syntactic.	'Yes/no' questions (e.g. 'Can you swim?'); pseudo-inversion (e.g. 'Where is my purse?').
5	Learner is now able to identify elements in a string as belonging to different syntactic categories. He or she is able to shift elements around inside the string.	'Wh'-inversion (e.g. 'Where are you playing football?'); internal negation (e.g. 'He did not understand').
6	Learner is now able to move elements out of one sub-string and attach them to another element. This stage is characterized by the ability of the learner to process across as well as inside strings.	Question tags (e.g. 'You are playing football today, aren't you?'); V-complements (e.g. 'He asked me to play football').

*Table 3.4. Processing operations involved in the acquisition of grammatical rules with examples from English (adapted from Ellis 1994: 386; based on Pienemann, Johnston and Brindley 1988).*

transition to Stage 3 is marked by the appearance of the capacity to manipulate such elements as adverbs or one-word negation, and place them at the beginning or end of a sentence. At Stage 4, the ability to identify less salient internal constituents and move them to utterance initial or final position appears, and, by Stage 5 learners are capable of identifying syntactic categories and manipulating them inside a string. Finally, at Stage 6, internal analysis at the level of clause becomes possible and the learner becomes capable of performing more complex syntactic operations (cf. Mitchell and Myles 1998; Skehan 1998).

An important contribution of the Multidimensional Model is that it has also sought to extend the idea of fixed developmental sequences and processing operations to English and German morphology, as is evident in the distinction between *local morphemes* and *non-local morphemes* (Pienemann and Johnston 1986). The former comprise linguistic features, such as the German 'ge-' prefix in developmental past participles (e.g. 'gedenkt') or English plural '-s' and past tense '-ed', where functional mapping occurs within a major constituent and Stage 4 operations are sufficient. By contrast, the latter involve relating different constituents, which necessitates the application of advanced internal manipulation typical of Stage 5, the English third person '-s' being a good case in point. However, it is also recognized that learners may differ in their application of a particular rule to different contexts as well as in their concern with communicative effectiveness and the accuracy or complexity of their speech. Also, what is of particular significance to the present work, the theory posits that language forms such as the copula or adverbs, called *variational features*, are not constrained by speech-processing strategies and can be acquired at any time, although they are perhaps easy to forget.

Building on the notion of learnability as determined by the operation of psycholinguistic constraints, Pienemann (1985) has applied the Multidimensional Model to language teaching and put forward the Teachability Hypothesis which "predicts that instruction can only promote language acquisition if the interlanguage is close to the point when the structure to be taught is acquired in the natural setting" (1985: 36).<sup>11</sup> In effect, building on an earlier pro-

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<sup>11</sup> In his more recent writings, Pienemann is more cautious about the effectiveness of formal instruction. He points out, for example, that the

posal advanced by Valdman (1978), among others, he suggests that the classroom syllabus should match the learner's internal syllabus, and that teachers should introduce linguistic features in the same order in which they have been shown to be naturally acquired. Reasonable as it might sound, however, the proposal has never really been heeded by materials designers and practitioners for the simple reason that our knowledge of the acquisition orders and sequences is still woefully inadequate and confined to a tiny fraction of features in a handful of languages. It is also difficult to see how the developmental level learners have reached could be established. Even if the two seemingly insuperable tasks could be accomplished, the teacher would be confronted with the problem of individual variation, which would render teaching the structures set to appear next in the interlanguage impracticable. As Lightbown (1998: 179) insightfully comments: "We are currently in no position to create a syllabus that would adequately cover what learners need to learn. In addition, the heterogeneity of classes is a well-known reality, one that would make developmentally targeted teaching very difficult to organize".<sup>12</sup>

The pedagogic recommendations advanced by Pienemann are also questioned by Nunan who points out that they are "premature and probably unwarranted" (1994: 262-263), and argues that presenting and practicing structures which are far beyond the learners' processing capacity is justifiable on acquisition, psycholinguistic and pedagogic grounds. What should also be kept in mind are the findings of *projection studies* (see section 3.3.3. above) which indicate that instruction directed at more advanced features in an implicational scale can result in the acquisition of the less advanced or marked forms. In addition, Spada and Lightbown (1999) have recently produced evidence that the effectiveness of instruction may not always be the function of the developmental stage and also

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ability to process a structure may not be a sufficient condition for acquisition since a function need also has to be present. Besides, functional constraints can interact with processing constraints, with the effect that some grammatical information may be unavailable to the learner because of the complexity of form-function mappings (cf. Pienemann 1998).

<sup>12</sup> It should be noted that Lightbown (1998) makes her comment because she does not see much need for a structural syllabus and step-by-step teaching of language forms, a position which is radically different from that advocated in the present work.

depends on L1 influence. Finally, some research shows that developmental constraints do not apply to acquisition viewed in terms of comprehension (Buczowska and Weist 1991) and Ellis (1997, 2002a) has repeatedly argued that acquisition sequences impose limitations on the development and utilization of implicit, and not explicit knowledge. Irrespective of these weaknesses, there can be little doubt that the Teachability Hypothesis views FFI as an integral component of classroom language learning, and, although it holds that its utility is contingent on learners' developmental readiness, it does not restrict the available instructional options in any way.

### 3.3.3. Noticing Hypothesis

The Noticing Hypothesis was proposed by Schmidt (1990, 1994, 1995b) on the basis of his experience of both formal and naturalistic learning of Portuguese in Brazil and, in particular, his personal diary in which he recorded his comments about the learning process. In general terms, the hypothesis states that "SLA is largely driven by what learners pay attention to and notice in target language input and what they understand the significance of noticed input to be" (Schmidt 2001: 4-5). To be more precise, noticing specific language forms in the input, understood as bringing them into focal attention by registering their occurrence in a more or less voluntary way, is regarded as crucial to acquisition, because it is a necessary condition for the conversion of input into intake for subsequent processing. This is consistent with Schmidt's claim that "what learners notice in input is what becomes intake for learning" (1995b: 20). As learners pay attention to linguistic features, they may spot important details and manage to find a solution to the *matching problem* (Klein 1986), or to *notice the gap* (Schmidt and Frota 1986) between the utterances they have produced, or even what they know they can or cannot say, and the way the same intention or message is conveyed under similar social circumstances in the TL. In other words, noticing enables learners to attend to the mismatches between their IL systems and the target language as well as to detect the holes in their fledgling competence, thus triggering the necessary cognitive comparisons and ultimately influencing the deeper, longer-term processes of L2 development.

As Doughty (2001) explains, the importance of selective attention and cognitive comparison may lie in the fact that, in contrast to such largely continual, automatic and inaccessible *macroprocesses* of language learning as internalization of input, mapping, analysis and restructuring, they represent shorter-term moment-to-moment *microprocesses* which may be open to immediate influence, and, as such, susceptible to FFI. Obviously, for the connections between old and new information to be created and the restructuring of implicit knowledge to occur, such intervention would have to be provided within the *optimal cognitive window of opportunity* when a relevant segment of long-term memory is activated either in its own right or in the short-term memory store. This has a direct bearing on the type of intervention, which should not be overly intrusive so as not to disrupt the primary focus on meaning, and be optimally timed to fit into the most propitious cognitive window, which Doughty and Williams (1998c) have hypothesized to be only 40 seconds in length.

Such an account of the facilitative effects of noticing appears to be largely congruent with that envisaged by Schmidt (2001), who clearly separates *noticing as conscious attention* from *metalinguistic awareness*, and assumes that "the objects of attention and noticing are elements of the surface structure of utterances in the input – instances of language, rather than any abstract rules or principles of which such instances may be exemplars" (2001: 5). In addition, he concentrates on attention and noticing in terms of awareness at a very low level of abstraction, thus equating them with what Gass (1997) has termed *apperception*, Tomlin and Villa (1994) have described as *detection within selective attention*, and Robinson (1995) has characterized as *detection plus rehearsal in short term memory*.<sup>13</sup> He views attention as a limited, selective resource, which is subject to voluntary control, regulates access to consciousness, is essential for automatic processing, and critical for successful learning, both implicit and explicit. Contrary to Tomlin and Villa (1994), however, he argues that it is not *sheer registration*, or detection below the

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<sup>13</sup> Gass (1997) does not seem to agree with Schmidt (1990: 139) that "intake is that part of the input that the learner notices". She uses the term *apperception* or *selective cueing* to refer to "the process of understanding by which newly observed qualities of an object are initially related to past experiences" (1997: 4), which, in turn, influences the selection of the material the learner has noticed.

threshold of consciousness, but, rather, *detection within focal attention* accompanied by awareness, or conscious perception, that is necessary for further processing and learning of novel stimuli. Although he does admit that implicit learning without a certain degree of consciousness is possible, he insists that "this appears limited in scope and relevance for SLA" (2001: 1) and "non-conscious registration applies to well-learned rather than new information" (2001: 31) or automatic, unaware activation of existing knowledge, which leads to the conclusion that attended learning is far superior.

Obviously, noticing elements in the input is not guaranteed as it is influenced by the frequency and salience of a feature, differences in learners' input processing capacities as well as their developmental readiness. In classroom language learning, successful noticing can be enhanced by manipulating task objectives and demands as well as the provision of explicit instruction, which can be employed to change learners' expectations and direct their attention to the forms and meanings in the input, thus acting as a *cognitive focusing device* (cf. Schmidt 1995b, 2001). More specifically, Schmidt (1994) proposes that metalinguistic awareness induced by instruction may aid students in detecting mismatches between their interlanguage variety and the target variety (Klein 1986), making better use of subsequent explanation and corrective feedback as well as manipulating and transforming the material once they have been familiarized with its structure (Karmiloff-Smith 1986). An important caveat, however, is that more or less explicit pedagogic intervention may not be equally effective for all language forms and it only contributes to *externally derived salience* of elements in the input. As such, it does not guarantee that these elements will be noticed and taken in, and can only be viewed as a tool for stimulating *internally derived salience* necessary for the occurrence of cognitive comparisons and subsequent interlanguage restructuring (cf. Sharwood-Smith 1993).

Although some objections have been raised concerning the claim that learning of new material is not possible without awareness, the theoretical underpinnings of the proposal as well as the fact that it may be unfalsifiable (Robinson 2003), the concepts of attention and noticing are central to many theoretical accounts of SLA, as is evident in the great number of references made to them

in the literature. This suggests that many applied linguists agree to some extent with Schmidt's (2001: 11) pronouncement that:

(...) attention is a crucial point for SLA. The allocation of attention is the pivotal point at which learner-internal factors (including aptitude, motivation, current L2 knowledge, and processing ability) and learner-external factors (including the complexity and distributional characteristics of input, discorsal and interactional context, instructional treatment, and task characteristics) come together. What then happens within attentional space largely determines the course of language development, including the growth of knowledge (the establishment of new representations), fluency (access to that knowledge), and variation.

It should also be clear from the foregoing discussion that the Noticing Hypothesis can easily be invoked in justification of different variants of FFI. On the one hand, it lends credence to different *focus on form activities*, in Long's (1991) understanding of the term (e.g. recasting). On the other hand, it provides a rationale for more traditional activities and lesson formats such as the PPP on condition that, at some point, students will be provided with opportunities for communicative exposure and creating form-meaning-function mappings.

### 3.3.4. Delayed-Effect Hypothesis

According to the Delayed-Effect Hypothesis, although the effects of teaching may not immediately translate into error-free performance, FFI can 'plant the seeds for later-stage development' and facilitate the acquisition of a particular feature when the learner has reached the requisite level of developmental readiness (Lightbown 1985; Ellis 1994, 1997; Lightbown 1998). Such a proposal is in line with the previously discussed research findings indicating that instructed learners manifest higher rates of acquisition, greater proficiency gains and higher levels of ultimate attainment than naturalistic acquirers (cf. Long 1983b, 1988). While this kind of evidence is perhaps somewhat limited and speculative, more direct support for the hypothesis derives from recent studies which found that the improvement in the accurate production of the targeted form was



greater on delayed rather than immediate posttests (Mackey 1999; Muranoi 2000; Pawlak 2003a).

There appear to exist several plausible and somewhat complementary explanations for how pedagogic intervention can aid the acquisition of the linguistic features taught in the long run despite its inability to initially affect learners' output. For one thing, instruction may enable learners to develop a conscious understanding, or explicit knowledge of the structure, thus functioning as an *advance organizer* which directs their attention to the relevant form when it becomes available in the communicative input in the classroom and outside. In other words, it is likely to have a *priming effect*, making a particular phenomenon more accessible on subsequent encounters without the necessity of bringing the rule back to the learners' conscious attention. To quote Doughty, "(...) it appears entirely plausible that some kind of cognitive preparation for focus on form would facilitate learner noticing of relevant input" (2001: 250). Even when FFI is implicit and does not aim to develop conscious knowledge, it may help learners *store a trace*, which will foster deeper levels of processing the next time they are exposed to the target form (cf. Stevick 1996; Larsen-Freeman 2003). Similarly, as will be elaborated below, the provision of more or less implicit negative evidence in negotiated sequences may serve to initiate interlanguage change and lead to delayed learning after an *incubation period*, during which further evidence necessitating such a change is forthcoming (Ellis 1999b; Gass 1997, 2003).

Finally, it is hypothesized that utterances resulting from metalinguistic knowledge or memorized formulaic expressions serve as auto-input to learners' IL system, even though they may not bring about its immediate restructuring (cf. Sharwood-Smith 1981; Lightbown 1992). In a study by Spada and Lightbown (1993), for example, learners whose overall performance indicated that they were at Stage 2 of Pienemann, Johnston and Brindley's (1988) framework for sequences of development in English questions were observed to produce a small number of Stage 4 and 5 questions. Such utterances were classified by the researchers as unanalyzed chunks, but the students apparently knew what they meant and how to use them appropriately. As Lightbown speculates, "It may be that these chunk or semichunk utterances were serving as available input to the learners' own developing systems" (1998: 183). A similar point is made by Nunan (1994) who talks about the *gestation period*

for language development and makes the point that learners can develop the ability to manipulate TL utterances initially learnt as formulae, which, in turn, may be broken down for analysis and set off the processes of acquisition. In fact, classroom studies by Myles, Hooper and Mitchell (1998, 1999) and Myles (2004) demonstrate that this is often indeed the case. On the whole, although the Delayed-Effect Hypothesis sees the role of FFI in fostering classroom language learning as rather indirect and perhaps subsidiary to meaningful communication, it is clearly supportive of both implicit and explicit pedagogic intervention.

### 3.3.5. Input Processing Theory

In the words of VanPatten (2002: 757), Input Processing Theory "is concerned with how learners derive intake from input regardless of the language being learned and regardless of the context (i.e. instructed, noninstructed)", where intake is understood as "the linguistic data actually processed from the input and held in working memory for further processing". More specifically, the theory seeks to account for how second language learners manage to extract morphosyntactic features from the available input and how they go about the task of parsing utterances in comprehending messages when they primarily attend to meaning. These are indeed very pertinent questions to pose in view of the fact that L2 learners tend to prioritize processing meaning over form, and have to cope with the limited attentional resources of the working memory which is forced to dump excess data to handle new information.

In order to gain insights into how the incoming data are processed, VanPatten (1990b) conducted a study in which learners performed a listening comprehension task, but, apart from having to reproduce the information they heard, different groups were instructed to pinpoint specific linguistic features such as lexical items, articles, grammatical morphemes, etc. He found that comprehension scores deteriorated in situations where the subjects had to shift their attention from meaning to form, and concluded that there exist constraints on what can be extracted from communicative input in real-time processing. Their operation makes it unfeasible for learners to attend to language forms, let alone utilize them in cognitive comparisons of any kind. On the basis of such empirical

evidence, VanPatten (1996, 2000, 2002) has proposed a set of *principles for input processing* which are presented in Table 3.5.

Principle	Description
P1	Learners process input for meaning before they process it for form. P1a. Learners process content words in the input before anything else. P1b. Learners prefer processing lexical items to grammatical items (e.g. morphology) for the same semantic information. P1c. Learners prefer processing 'more meaningful' morphology before 'less' or 'nonmeaningful' morphology.
P2	For learners to process form that is not meaningful, they must be able to process informational or communicative content at no (or little) cost to attention.
P3	Learners possess a default strategy that assigns the role of agent (or subject) to the first noun (phrase) they encounter in a sentence/utterance. This is called the first-noun strategy. P3a. The first-noun strategy may be overridden by lexical semantics and event probabilities. P3b. Learners will adopt other processing strategies for grammatical role assignment only after their developing system has incorporated other cues (e.g. case marking, acoustic stress).
P4	Learners process elements in sentence/utterance initial position first. P4a. Learners process elements in final position before elements in initial position.

*Table 3.5. Principles of input processing (adapted from VanPatten 2002: 758).*

Even a cursory glance at these principles is enough to realize that the demands which on-line comprehension, be it in the language classroom or out there in the real world, places on the scarce working memory capacity virtually preclude learners from attending to certain forms in the input, particularly those that have little communicative value. What is more, in situations where learners segment the incoming speech using their L1 word order rules, they can encounter a processing barrier and apperceive the wrong meaning. The existence of such constraints demonstrates that neither plentiful exposure nor opportunities for meaningful communication can ever ensure that learners will naturally focus on language forms. Thus, some pedagogical intervention appears indispensable if such features are to be identified and extracted from the input, and the challenge of impoverished intake is to be tackled. VanPatten (1996, 2000, 2002) offers a plausible solution to the

problem in the form of *processing instruction* (PI), designed to alter learners' processing of the input in such a way that the elements which are the most difficult and unnatural to pay attention to, such as semantically redundant aspects of morphology, become more prominent. As he explains, "The most salient characteristic of PI is that it uses a particular type of input to push learners away from the nonoptimal processing strategies (...) A secondary salient characteristic of PI is that during the instructional phase, learners never produce the target form in question" (2002: 764). By his own admission, however, this should not to be interpreted as obviating a role for output practice at later stages since actually generating utterances may be instrumental in helping learners become more fluent and accurate, or in acquiring other aspects of the TL (see Chapter Four, section 4.1.1.2.2. for discussion of PI activities).

The claims of Input Processing Theory as well as the pedagogical recommendations advanced on its basis have been investigated in a number of studies, of which perhaps the best known was carried out by VanPatten and Cadierno (1993). They compared PI with traditional instruction and concluded that it was effective in helping experimental learners restructure their interlanguage knowledge. Such claims prompted a spate of replication studies aimed at substantiating the claims concerning the relative benefits of input- and output-oriented FFI, some of which will be reviewed in section 4.1.1.2.2. of Chapter Four. The swift and vigorous reaction to processing instruction on the part of the SLA community is perhaps reflective of the somewhat controversial status of the assumptions upon which it is predicated. Indeed, for some, it may be too extreme in its virtual rejection of the role for output in the development of TL grammar while others may deem it too conservative, suggesting that it represents in a new guise what Long (1988) has referred to as *Neanderthal traditional grammar teaching*. There are also doubts whether this type of instruction is applicable to situations where learner errors cannot be traced back to the existence of differential processing strategies in the L1 and L2 since, as Doughty rightly points out, "If the error was not a consequence of a processing problem, then PI would not be expected to be effective" (2003: 289). It is beyond the scope of the present work to resolve such contentious issues, but it is self-evident that Input Processing Theory ascribes a principal role to FFI in classroom

language learning, even though the optimal pedagogic intervention proposed may be somewhat peculiar and limited in scope.

### 3.3.6. Interaction-based Theories

Although Interaction-Based Theories differ in their allegiance to what Sford (1998) describes as the *acquisition metaphor* and the *participation metaphor* for learning, or their emphasis on the psycholinguistic processes and the social dimensions of language acquisition and use, they are discussed under the same heading since the aim of the author is to focus on the ways in which they point to the facilitative effect of pedagogical intervention rather than assess their relative contributions to the field. The importance of social interaction as a matrix for successful acquisition has long been acknowledged by SLA researchers of diverse hue, as is visible in an almost 30-year-old famous statement by Hatch that "one learns how to do conversation, one learns how to interact, and out of the interaction syntactic structures are developed" (1978: 404). However, large-scale empirical investigations of the impact of interaction on comprehension and acquisition only got under way with the emergence of the early version of Long's (1983a) Interaction Hypothesis, which underscored the importance of *negotiation of meaning* (i.e. conversational exchanges which serve to ward off or resolve communicative impasses) as well as *interactional modifications* (i.e. changes to conversation structure which aim to accommodate impending or actual communication breakdowns) in obtaining comprehensible input, and, as such, was an extension of Krashen' (1985) Input Hypothesis. Such a proposal was challenged on a number of fronts, with researchers expressing reservations about the feasibility of incidental, comprehension-based acquisition and the elevated status of interactionally modified input. Empirical evidence was also forthcoming that an abundance of negotiated interaction does not lead to improved comprehension and eliminates the need to attend to certain morphosyntactic features (see Ellis 1999b; Majer 2003; Pawlak 2004d, for reviews).

Such criticisms were partly addressed in the later version of the Interaction Hypothesis, which draws upon Schmidt's (1990, 1994) concept of *noticing* and states that "*negotiation for meaning*, and especially negotiation work that triggers *interactional* adjustments by the NS or more competent interlocutor, facilitates acquisition

because it connects input, internal learner capacities, particularly selective attention, and output in productive ways" [emphases original] (Long 1996: 451-452). Thus, it is reiterated that negotiation assists acquisition by providing learners with better quality *positive evidence* as a result of enhancing the salience of form-function mappings and segmenting the incoming data into linguistic units, even though the modifications tend to be semantic rather than morphosyntactic in nature (cf. Pica 1992, 1996). What is also recognized, however, is that negotiated interaction can contribute to acquisition through the provision of *negative evidence* in the form of direct or indirect corrective feedback as well as opportunities for *modified output*. As regards the former, Long (1996: 414) believes that it "may be facilitative of L2 development, at least for vocabulary, morphology, and language-specific syntax, and essential for learning certain specifiable L1-L2 contrasts", a stance that is akin in many respects to that adopted by White (1991) (see section 3.1.2. above). He attaches particular importance to *recasts* (i.e. utterances which rephrase an erroneous utterance while preserving its central meaning) which immediately follow the learner's contribution and afford him or her the opportunity to engage in cognitive comparison and detect the mismatches between the two versions so juxtaposed (see Chapter Four, section 4.1.2. for discussion of this and other feedback options). In fact, such a position finds support in first language acquisition research and resembles the claims that Saxton (1997) makes in his *Direct Contrast Hypothesis*.

When it comes to the concept of *modified output*, the recent version of the Interaction Hypothesis ties in very nicely with the claims of the Output Hypothesis advanced by Merrill Swain (1985, 1995) on the basis of her research into French immersion programs (see section 3.1.2. above). She argues that generating output aids language acquisition much more than comprehending input since it requires greater mental effort and obligates learners to engage in *grammatical, syntactic processing* needed for accurate production as opposed to the predominantly *semantic, strategic processing* involved in comprehension. Moreover, she insists that L2 development is facilitated when "(...) in speaking and writing, learners can 'stretch' their interlanguage to meet their communicative goals" (2000: 99). Thus, there is a need for students to produce what she terms *comprehensible* or *pushed output* which not only successfully gets the message across but does so in a precise, accurate and appropriate manner (Swain

1985). This can obviously be accomplished by dint of negotiated interaction focusing not only on the meanings learners struggle to express but also on the language forms deployed to encode such meanings, as well as the availability of implicit or explicit corrective feedback.

Drawing upon Swain (1995), Skehan (1998) and Ellis (2003, 2005a), it is possible to list the following contributions of output to the development of grammatical competence:

- obtaining better quality input through the feedback that learners' utterances elicit;
- directing students' attention to morphosyntactic features;
- enabling learners to test out hypotheses about TL grammar;
- automatizing existing knowledge;
- allowing learners to improve their discourse skills and produce sustained speech;
- steering classroom discourse on to topics to which learners are eager to contribute;
- providing learners with auto-input which can be used to restructure their interlanguage systems at a later time (see section 3.3.4. above).

One more role of output that Swain views as particularly vital is the function of *stimulating metatalk*, or getting learners to consciously reflect on the language they use in the context of communicating meaning, which may serve the purpose of "helping students to understand the relationship between meaning, forms and function in a highly context-sensitive situation" (1998: 69). In her more recent writings, Swain (2000) refers to this kind of output as *collaborative dialogue* and claims that it enables learners to jointly construct new knowledge as it mediates their understanding and solutions. In this way, she forges an important link between largely computational Interaction and Output Hypotheses and the more socially-oriented perspectives on the role of interaction.

Perhaps the best known manifestation of the social-psychological orientation in the field of SLA is Sociocultural Theory. It was originated by Vygotsky (1978) and is built on the assumption that, like all other learning, language learning involves the transformation of biologically determined mental functions into more complex cognitive abilities, which is accompanied by the development of consciousness and self-regulation necessary for

successful problem-solving (cf. Lantolf 2000b, 2006). The process of learning is believed to be mediated by social interaction and it is assumed that specific functions are first performed on the social plane in collaboration with other people and only at a later stage can they be achieved individually. This happens by means of *scaffolding*, where conversational partners assist one another in accomplishing tasks they could not perform on their own. In the case of language learning, it involves the use of *vertical constructions*, where the learner succeeds in creating more complex utterances over a few turns with the assistance of a more proficient target language user, thus advancing linguistically (Hatch 1978; Ellis 1999b). The theory also recognizes the importance of learner-internal factors since, if successful learning is to occur in this way, the learner needs to interact with a more knowledgeable partner in the *zone of proximal development* (ZPD). This is understood as the area where development is possible in collaboration with more proficient speakers, lying between the learner's current level of development and the skills and knowledge that are not accessible to him or her under any circumstances.

Since Sociocultural Theory attempts to account for how people acquire language, it inevitably brings with it a number of pedagogical implications for foreign and second language classrooms, although these are seldom comprehensive and explicitly stated. Taking into account what has just been said, it can be assumed that instruction should be meaning-focused and attempt to emulate to some extent the patterns of naturalistic discourse, moving towards a type of pedagogic interaction known as *transformation* (van Lier 1996). However, this kind of discourse should be enhanced with collaborative dialogues encouraging conscious reflection on language use (Swain 2000), the provision of scaffolding by means of corrective feedback (Aljaafreh and Lantolf 1994), tasks fostering negotiation of form and meaning (van Lier 2000), teacher-fronted role-playing or the completion of demanding translation tasks (Ohta 2000a). In fact, even a grammar lecture can be condoned and the use of rather traditional production practice activities can be justified if they are directed at structures within the ZPD (Ohta 2001), and, thus, fit in with what van Lier (2000) labels an *ecological approach* to language learning and teaching.

Irrespective of their concern with the psycholinguistic or the social, the main limitation of Interaction-Based Theories is the



paucity of research demonstrating that negotiation of form and meaning or collaborative dialogue can assist acquisition in the long term. In addition, there is a question of individual differences, with some learners being reluctant to indicate lack of understanding, modify their output in response to clarification requests or participate in scaffolded interaction. Besides, as the present author (Pawlak 2004d) found, the amount of negotiation can be a function of the instructional setting since the availability of the shared L1 effectively obviates the need to overcome misunderstandings through the TL both in teacher-fronted and group work activities. Such weaknesses, however, do not warrant a dismissal of Interaction-Based Theories or a denial of the value of negotiated interaction or instructional scaffolding in promoting acquisition. If such contributions are to be accepted, it also has to be recognized that although classroom teaching should provide opportunities for meaning and message conveyance, such instruction should be enriched with explicit and implicit corrective feedback, negotiation of language forms, communicative tasks revolving around specific linguistic features, and perhaps even more traditional grammar explanations and exercises.

### 3.3.7. Connectionist perspectives

The central assumption of connectionist approaches, also known as *parallel distributed processing* (PDP) or *emergentist models*, is that the human brain creates *neural networks* consisting of complex clusters of links between information nodes which grow in strength or weaken depending on the frequency with which they are activated. In such models, learning is an associative process and it is the outcome of repeated activation of such networks, which leads to the strengthening of the connections, with the effect that the links are themselves more easily activated, they multiply and eventually are subsumed under larger networks (cf. Mitchell and Myles 1998; N. Ellis 2003). In this view, language learning does not entail the construction of abstract rules through deductive inferencing on the basis of some innate principles or inductive inferencing from input data, but, rather, the formation of connections between larger and smaller lexical units, objects, situations, and events. The more frequently regularities such as the co-occurrence of a language form in specific

contexts can be detected, the more often particular patterns are activated and the connections strengthened.

Thus, for example, when native speakers or L2 learners produce utterances such as 'he goes', 'he went' or 'he has gone', this is not the result of the application of abstract rules concerning tense formation, but, rather, the consequence of the existence of strong links between the constituents in specific neural networks reflecting their continual co-occurrence in the input. In other words, the pronoun 'she' triggers 'goes' with reference to the present tense and 'went' in the context of past events, and activates 'has gone' where the present and past perspectives merge. The same process accounts for combining 'he' with 'goes' or 'has' rather than 'go' and 'have', as well as the use of the past participle rather than a past tense form in the present perfect tense. In effect, to quote from N. Ellis, connectionist approaches posit that "(...) much of language learning is the gradual strengthening of associations between co-occurring elements of the language and that fluent language performance is the exploitation of this probabilistic knowledge (...) to the extent that language processing is based on frequency and probabilistic knowledge, language learning is implicit learning" (2002: 173). As for empirical evidence invoked to substantiate such claims, it comes from computer models of networks which simulate the functioning of neural networks in the brain (e.g. Sokolik and Smith 1992).

Connectionist accounts of language learning have had their share of criticism and while some scholars, such as Gregg (2001), reject them out of hand, others point to their limitations. DeKeyser (2003: 30) suggests, for example, that "Beyond the issue of the possible representation of French gender or other probabilistic patterns in advanced learners, it is not clear what connectionist models can contribute to a theory of second language learning at this point". While being more optimistic about connectionism Larsen-Freeman (2003), in turn, concedes that computer models cannot imitate human intentionality and agency, and they do not account for how attention may speed up the learning process. On the whole, however, researchers tend to agree that there are aspects of language which are mainly learnt through association. In particular, this applies to multi-word lexical phrases which are thought to underlie fluent and effortless everyday language use.

Leaving such considerations aside, a viable question to ask at this point concerns the relevance of including connectionist ap-

proaches in a chapter the aim of which is to make a case for the facilitative effect of FFI. After all, one could easily argue that implicit associative learning is unlikely to be assisted by pedagogic intervention since learners can hardly be expected to consciously notice, let alone count the occurrences of specific linguistic features in the input. Yet, even staunch advocates of connectionism tend to admit that "language acquisition can be speeded up by formal instruction" as long as the rules provided are accompanied by numerous illustrative exemplars of how they operate (N. Ellis 2002: 174). For one thing, FFI could benefit complex associations (such as ambiguous sequences) or low-salience cues (such as phonologically reduced tense-markings or various inflections) which, as postulated by the Competition Model, can be overshadowed by more prominent cues in an utterance, particularly if the L1 cue strength hierarchy is very different from that in the L2 (cf. MacWhinney 2001; N. Ellis 2005). Just like researchers working within other theoretical frameworks, connectionists also view explicit instruction as a kind of priming device which sharpens perceptions and allows learners to recognize and attend to the recurring patterns in the input and "bind features to form newly integrated objects" (N. Ellis 2005: 317). And, finally, there is a place for production practice which is believed to improve access to exemplars, link together behaviors repeated in a sequence, assist chunking and the formation of ready-to-use formulas, automatize performance and make the utterances produced available as feedback to implicit knowledge (cf. Ellis 2005). All things considered, even if, what appears to be a rather remote possibility at the present time, connectionist accounts were to prevail as the leading theoretical model of SLA, FFI would still constitute part and parcel of a successful L2 program. As MacWhinney (1997: 278) wisely points out:

Students who receive explicit instruction, as well as implicit exposure to form, would seem to have the best of both worlds. They can use explicit instruction to allocate attention to specific types of input (...) narrow their hypothesis space (...) tune the weights in their neural networks (...) or consolidate their memory traces. From the viewpoint of psycholinguistic theory, providing learners with explicit instruction along with standard implicit exposure would seem to be a no-lose proposition.

### 3.3.8. The Dual-Mode System Hypothesis

The term Dual-Mode System Hypothesis is to some extent the author's invention and is used here to refer to a psycholinguistic model of proficiency proposed by Skehan (1996, 1998), which incorporates both a language dimension and a processing dimension, and explores the relationship between the two. Drawing upon the work of Bolinger (1975), Widdowson (1989), Pawley and Syder (1983) as well as the mounting evidence from corpus linguistics, he argues that exclusively rule-based accounts of language representation and performance are grossly inadequate. Thus, there is a need to acknowledge that both in native speakers and language learners a generative *rule-governed system* must be complemented with a parallel formulaic, *exemplar-based system* comprising a multitude of lexical units in the form of individual items, language chunks and formulas. At the same time, he admits that how exactly the *abstract memory system* and *instantiated memory system*, to use Reber's (1989) terminology, coexist and function in the mind of a particular L2 learner depends on a confluence of different factors, the most significant of which are the educational context and the related opportunities for naturalistic out-of-class target language exposure, the nature of the instruction students receive as well as an array of their individual characteristics.

At the level of representation, the *rule-based system* "is likely to be parsimoniously and elegantly organized, with rules being compactly structured (...) generative (...) creative in their application, and so precise in the meanings that they can express (...) [as well as] restructurable, with new rules replacing or subsuming old rules, and then functioning efficiently as an extended system" (Skehan 1998: 88). It is assumed that whenever a particular rule is to be applied in utterance construction, it will draw upon the needed lexical items neatly organized themselves in the mental lexicon. Also, such a system is believed to place priority on analyzability and is perhaps more likely to respond to explicit instruction and feedback, thus relying to a large extent on the explicit learning mode, which, obviously, does not exclude the possibility that much of the growth and restructuring will occur as a result of implicit learning. By contrast, the *exemplar-based system* "is heavily based on the operation of a redundant memory system in which there are multiple representations of the same lexical elements (...) the system lacks

parsimony, and has only a limited generative potential (...) In addition (...) the potential for expressing new and precise meanings is limited" (1998: 89). Although, as discussed in the previous section, explicit learning does have a role to play in the development of such an item-based system, the major causative factor underlying its expansion is probably implicit, associative learning, which may be accounted for by connectionist models (cf. Larsen-Freeman 2001a, 2003).

Although such a model of mental representation is not in itself revolutionary and it is consistent with the prevalent, though definitely not connectionist, explanations of implicit knowledge, its strength lies in its attempt to shed light on the operation of the dual-mode system in real-time processing necessary for everyday L2 performance. Since, similarly to many other proposals discussed in the present section, the model assumes a limited-capacity view of attention, the ease and speed with which the rule-based system and the memory-based system can be accessed in unplanned, spontaneous communication is bound to differ to a considerable degree. There can be little doubt that relying on the rule-governed module is likely to impose a heavy processing burden on the limited attention pool since rule-construction is a complex and demanding process which entails a recombination of numerous small elements. The reverse holds for the memory-based system where the existing discrete chunks and patterns do not have to be reanalyzed every time they are used, with the effect that they are less resource-draining and the learner is able to dedicate his ever-insufficient pool of attention to message formulation and further action planning.

As Skehan (1998) points out, both systems have their benefits and drawbacks and, thus, a native-speaker can easily draw upon either depending on contextual support, the amount of time available or the requirement for precision and novelty. Such adaptability is only possible because, although the initial stages of L1 acquisition are believed to involve contextually coded exemplars, this period of *lexicalization* is followed by the process of *syntacticalization*. Here, the available elements are reassembled and reorganized through the operation of an innate language faculty such as LAD to create a generative rule-based system permitting language development and change. Only at a later stage do the rules serve as a basis for the construction of a multitude of functionally autonomous multi-word units which can be drawn upon in on-line

processing, with the rule-based and exemplar-based systems existing side by side and being available for use depending on the communicative contexts and goals (cf. Carr and Curran 1994; Skehan 1998).

The situation looks very different in the case of L2 learners who are past the critical period and no longer have access to UG principles and parameters to guide them in the development of abstract rules on the basis of the dissociated lexical units they are exposed to in communication. In view of the fact that such capacity-stretched learners have a propensity to prioritize meaning over form (cf. VanPatten 2002), there is a very real danger that they will primarily fall back upon the exemplar-based system and never move beyond the stage of lexicalization, which will unavoidably result in the stabilization and fossilization of erroneous forms in their interlanguages. Thus, according to Skehan (1998: 91), if a learner is ever to be able to operate the two systems in a way similar to a native speaker, "it is necessary to *contrive* the movement through all three stages, given that this will not happen by itself" [emphasis original]. Surely, successful progression to the syntacticalization stage can only be accomplished through some kind of pedagogical intervention, which ensures that learners attend to specific language forms in the input, thus triggering the processes of what Klein (1986) has called *matching* (i.e. noticing and input processing) and *analysis* (i.e. deriving rules on the basis exemplars). As a result, abstract rules are induced from the knowledge of unrelated or loosely related lexical units. At the same time, subsequent relexicalization is only possible if learners engage in the process of *synthesis*, whereby the rule-based representation is constantly employed to create multi-word units that can be utilized in performance. The two processes being ongoing and indispensable for fluent, complex and accurate L2 use, it is necessary to combine meaning-centered and form-focused instruction so that both implicit and explicit learning can occur.

In the opinion of Skehan, this goal can most profitably be attained by means of task-based instruction since only a cyclical syllabus which underlies it "would revisit aspects of the emerging interlanguage syllabus regularly to enable newly analyzed or newly lexicalized material to be integrated into the developing system" (1998: 92). However, as he makes clear in a number of publications (e.g. Skehan 1996, 1998, 2002), what he has in mind is the weak

variant of this approach, which allows the preselection of language forms and maximizing the chances of their being noticed through instruction (see Chapter Four, section 4.2.1.). Even though it might be neither beneficial nor perhaps feasible in many instructional contexts to teach a foreign language exclusively through communicative tasks, it is clear that a dual-mode system perspective provides a compelling rationale for including FFI in the curriculum. It should be added that the case for pedagogic intervention derives exclusively from an account of how implicit knowledge is represented and used in performance, and it is indisputable that its role is incomparably greater when the development of explicit knowledge is the aim. In fact, the major drawback of the model appears to be the exclusion of conscious knowledge of rules and fragments and the concomitant failure to look into its potential contributions to online processing. After all, there is broad consensus that such knowledge represents a sizable portion of instructed learners' TL competence, particularly when they have scant opportunities for naturalistic exposure, and not only is it instrumental in monitoring output but may itself be involved in formulating messages when there is time to plan them (Yuan and Ellis 2003).

### 3.4. Towards a theory of instructed language learning

As can be seen from the overview of the different theoretical perspectives, there exist diverse and, in some cases, contradictory explanations of how the L2 is represented in the mind of the learner, how TL competence develops over time and how the implicit and explicit knowledge systems are accessed and utilized in generating output. Adopting sometimes quite disparate positions on such controversial issues is inextricably linked with embracing dissimilar views on the role of form-focused instruction, with the key differences centering around the degree of its utility, the most advantageous ways in which it should be provided, its timing and place in the curriculum, as well as the selection of the linguistic features that should be targeted. Moreover, most of the theoretical models are fragmentary in the sense that they focus on a particular aspect of L2 representation or development to the virtual exclusion of other vital processes and, thus, none of them can be regarded as a

comprehensive theory of instructed language learning in its own right. Equally problematic from the point of view of any applied linguist committed to making SLA theory and research relevant to pedagogy is the difficulty in translating some of the theoretically derived proposals into classroom practice, with the effect that teachers are often confronted with the task of achieving the unachievable.

For all of these reasons, it appears warranted to close the present chapter with the presentation and evaluation of a comprehensive, coherent and lucid account of instructed language acquisition which attempts to bring together a number of different theoretical perspectives and tie up all the loose ends, thus serving as a basis for advancing a set of cogent and practicable pedagogical proposals. A theory that, in the opinion of the present author, can be said to satisfy such criteria has been proposed by Rod Ellis (1997, 1998), a researcher who in the last decade has greatly contributed to our understanding of how grammar is learnt, and, much more importantly, how its acquisition can best be fostered through instruction. Like many other SLA specialists, he embraces a cognitive perspective, adopting the dominant computational metaphor in which the learner viewed as a processor of linguistic data and L2 acquisition is accounted for in terms of input, internal processing and output. Although, in most respects, the theory is as valid today as when it was first advanced, the present author has deemed it necessary to update and amend the original formulation to some extent in accordance with the latest theoretical developments and empirical findings. There was also a need to make it more applicable to foreign language contexts where both the quantity and quality of exposure leave much to be desired. In all such cases, the alterations to the original model are clearly indicated and the rationale for introducing them is offered.

### *The status of explicit and implicit L2 knowledge*

As noted earlier in this chapter and depicted in Table 3.3., implicit knowledge is represented in such a way that its use is essentially automatic, whereas explicit knowledge in such a way that it involves controlled processing, with the effect that there is a tendency to conflate the *explicit/implicit* and *controlled/automatic* dimensions, as Skill-Learning Theory does. While recognizing that accessibility



constitutes one of the criteria on the basis of which the two types of L2 representation can be differentiated, Ellis (1997) offers a finer-grained, four-way distinction reminiscent of those found in other cognitive theories, the best example being McLaughlin's (1990b) attention-processing model. As shown in the four cells of Figure 3.2., he proposes that both *explicit* and *implicit knowledge* can be accessed through *controlled* and *automatic processing*, a solution which appears to find support in recent research findings and has far-reaching implications for classroom language learning.

As regards explicit knowledge, it entails controlled processing (A) when learners have just been familiarized with or discovered a grammar rule, and attempt to apply it in a conscious and intentional manner in such traditional exercises as gap-filling or sentence-transformation. However, it is possible that, having practiced the rule in controlled and more communicative activities, learners may reach a stage where they engage in largely automatic processing (B). This means that the use of the structure is still conscious and intentional, but students are capable of employing it speedily, effortlessly and largely accurately in a range of different tasks, especially when they have ample time to plan their contributions.

Type of knowledge	Controlled processing	Automatic processing
Explicit	A A new explicit rule is used consciously and with deliberate effort.	B An old explicit rule is used consciously but with relative speed.
Implicit	C A new implicit rule is used without awareness but is accessed slowly and inconsistently.	D A fully learnt implicit rule is used without awareness and without effort.

*Figure 3.2. Types of L2 knowledge revisited (Ellis 1997: 112).*

Turning our attention to implicit knowledge, there are situations in which it also entails controlled processing, as when learners have noticed a new linguistic feature in the input and have internalized it to the point where they can produce it without conscious deliberation in spontaneous speech, but access to it is not

as easy as in the case of forms which have been in constant use for some time (C). This may be the case because the new form is replacing an already automatized earlier representation, it is difficult to process in generating output, or, perhaps, it has little communicative value and tends to be ignored in fluent performance. A familiar example of a situation when students can be observed to rely on implicit knowledge in largely controlled processing is the notorious omission of the third person '-s' ending or the past tense '-ed'. Since such errors are persistent even in the speech of fairly advanced learners, it is unlikely that they can be accounted for by developmental or processing constraints. This is because, whereas third person '-s' is indeed a *non-local morpheme*, the '-ed' ending is a *local* one and, thus, it should be available for unconstrained use once learners have advanced to Stage 4 of Pienemann, Johnston and Brindley's (1988) model. In fact, it could perhaps even be considered *variational* in that it may initially be learnt lexically (cf. Salaberry 2000). Although Ellis (1997) does not consider such a possibility, it could also be hypothesized that when a specific form is represented in implicit knowledge which is not entirely automatic, it may be available in comprehension but only partly so in production, which appears to be in line with some research findings (Buczowska and Weist 1991).

Accessibility problems no longer occur, or are confined to inaccurate retrieval, when implicit knowledge becomes fully automatic (D) and "resembles the kind of intuitive, readily accessible knowledge that native speakers utilize in everyday language use" (Ellis 1997: 112). Obviously, achieving this kind of representation through classroom instruction, particularly if it is limited in scope and unaccompanied by extensive out-of-school exposure, may be unfeasible for most learners except those blessed with considerable language aptitude or the motivation to augment what they know through individual study. This, however, typically entails the development of explicit knowledge, a point that will be considered in more detail below.

### *Interfaces between explicit and implicit knowledge*

It is now time to shift the focus of attention to the relationship between the two types of mental representation, which is a matter of great import to any cognitive account of SLA. Ellis (1997) rejects

both the *non-interface position* and the *strong-interface position* (see section 3.3. above), opting instead for the *weak interface position*, diagrammatically represented in Figure 3.3. He argues that explicit knowledge derived from FFI can convert into implicit knowledge only when learners are psycholinguistically ready to incorporate a specific feature into their IL systems (i.e. they have reached the requisite stage of processing operations) or when the feature is developmentally unconstrained (i.e. it is variational). While, in the former case, the existing implicit system acts as a kind of filter which sieves explicit knowledge and blocks that part of it that is in advance of the current level of development, it does not operate in the latter, with the result that the targeted structure is integrated directly into implicit representation, and, presumably, can initially be accessed only through controlled processing. Although this is not depicted in Figure 3.3., the weak interface position also holds that, apart from assisting the acquisition of new TL forms through the development of explicit knowledge, FFI makes yet another crucial contribution to L2 development by automatizing existing representations. More precisely, it helps learners gain greater control over elements stored in explicit or implicit knowledge, and access them with greater facility, as dictated by the demands of a communicative goal. For the sake of clarity and precision, the claims of the weak interface position can be summarized as follows (Ellis 1997: 115):

- 1) explicit knowledge transforms into implicit knowledge in the case of linguistic features which are non-developmental (i.e. variational);
- 2) explicit knowledge can also be converted into implicit knowledge in the case of developmental forms and structures providing the learner has advanced far enough along the developmental sequence;
- 3) explicit knowledge cannot transform into implicit knowledge if a developmentally constrained structure is beyond the learner's current interlanguage stage;
- 4) despite the contributions of explicit knowledge, more often than not, L2 competence originates in an implicit rather than explicit form;

- 5) formal instruction can aid the automatization of both explicit and implicit knowledge.

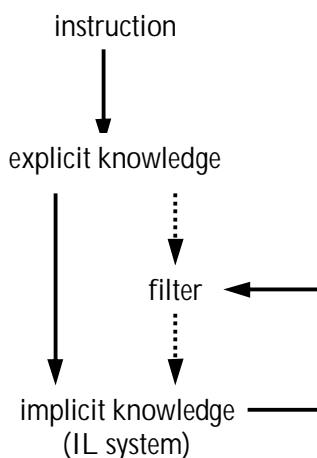


Figure 3.3. *The weak interface position (Ellis 1997: 114).*

Although, on the whole, such a position sits well with the present author, the point that appears to be somewhat controversial, on the one hand, and consequential, on the other, is that most L2 knowledge is implicit from the very start, and, thus, it could be assumed, is the outcome of implicit rather than explicit learning. While this assumption is uncontroversial for naturalistic learners and such who have access to abundant exposure, it is too optimistic at best in the case of learners in foreign language contexts, with the effect that the role of FFI may be much greater than Ellis recognizes. Conversely, if it were to be accepted that implicit knowledge is the default form of knowing a language, both first and second, and it is this system that underlies fluent performance, it is unclear why we should exclude the possibility that appropriately selected and timed instructional techniques and procedures may impact the learner's developing interlanguage system more directly, bypassing, as it were, the explicit knowledge store. The two possibilities will be explored in greater depth in the discussion of the development of L2 knowledge and the contributions of FFI to which we now turn.

### *Development of second language knowledge*

Beyond doubt, neither explicit nor implicit L2 representation could ever originate without access to language data since, as Gass rightly asserts, "second language acquisition is shaped by the input one receives" (1997: 27). Obviously, what exactly instructed learners will acquire depends to a large extent on the amount and type of TL exposure they will obtain in the classroom and beyond. As discussed in section 3.1.5. above, pedagogic discourse in the foreign language classroom seldom affords an acquisition-rich environment, particularly when the teacher places a premium on grammatical accuracy and shies away from using the TL in pursuing not only social and framework but also many core goals (Ellis 1984a). In fact, in most cases, instruction is still very traditional in the sense that the main concern is with grammar rules or lexis as well as the application thereof in numerous practice activities where students are provided with feedback on their errors. These activities tend to range from decontextualized exercises through slightly less controlled activities to semi-communicative or communicative tasks, thus representing the PPP sequence. Unfortunately, the last stage is often neglected and, therefore, students can count themselves lucky when they have a chance to use new forms in communicative drills of some kind (cf. Pawlak in press).

Once the weak-interface position is adopted, this kind of instruction mostly contributes to the development of explicit knowledge which can only convert into implicit knowledge if it is directed at structures that students are ready to acquire. Also, although intensive practice is likely to result in the automatization of explicit knowledge, in all likelihood, it will have little effect on improving access to implicit representation as this would require that the targeted features be deployed in message and meaning communication. And here lies the crux of the problem since not only are open-ended communicative activities such as information-gap or decision-making tasks all but absent from numerous classrooms, but learners may also be stripped of opportunities to be exposed to the structures taught in the input when much of the interaction proceeds in their mother tongue. Besides, even when the teacher chooses to use the TL regularly, pedagogic discourse is often organized in such a way that communication breakdowns are very

unlikely, and, even when they do occur, it is much easier to resolve them by means of the shared L1 than the L2. This being the case, it is perhaps wishful thinking to expect numerous negotiated sequences, interactional modifications and instances of modified output, all of which are believed to assist acquisition (Pawlak 2004d, 2004f). If, in addition to that, the prospects for obtaining out-of-class exposure are scant, even the most ambitious and assiduous learner may be stuck with learning grammar and lexis, or reading and listening to sometimes rather inauthentic coursebook material. Beyond doubt, under such circumstances, the chances of L2 knowledge originating in an implicit form are indeed very remote.

Given such a state of affairs, it seems warranted to first explain how conscious L2 knowledge originates or, to put it differently, how explicit learning occurs. According to Ellis (1997), "explicit learning is necessarily intentional. It requires learners to consciously attend to the formal properties of the input, possibly at the expense of attending to meaning. Alternatively, it requires learners to identify elements in their implicit knowledge and reflect on them (...)". Irrespective of its precise starting point, explicit learning invariably involves constructing rules or making generalizations, and it is predicated on the assumption that learners are aware of being engaged in such metalinguistic analyses and manipulations, even when no attempt is made to have them comprehend or use metalanguage. Following Ellis, it is reasonable to assume that explicit learning is based on *non-specialized general cognitive mechanisms* and it proceeds in exactly the same manner as the learning of any other complex skill, starting with declarative knowledge which is gradually proceduralized and automatized by dint of practice, as predicted by Anderson's (1983) ACT Model. Learning of this kind is hypothesized to involve two basic processes, namely:

- 1) *memorization*, which consists in committing to memory not only grammatical information, be it grammar rules, irregular verb lists or proper names obligatorily preceded by the definite article, but also, perhaps less frequently, specific exemplars in the form of isolated lexical items and multi-word units;
- 2) *problem-solving*, which occurs when "learners attempt to induce explicit information about the L2 from the input data they are exposed to or from their implicit knowledge" (Ellis

1997: 117); such induction takes place when a linguistic feature is so prominent in its frequency or extraordinariness that the learner consciously tries to figure out the details of its form, meaning and use; alternatively, students can work with L2 data to discover some patterns and regularities, which can be encouraged through the use of consciousness-raising tasks (see Chapter Four, section 4.1.1.2.1.).

What is of vital importance, the growth of explicit knowledge is not constrained by the presence of developmental sequences and the availability of processing operations (cf. Ellis 2006). Rather, the learning difficulty is the outcome of a combination of factors which include, among other things, formal and conceptual simplicity, communicative value or frequency in the input (see Chapter Four, section 4.2.3.).

The fact that classroom instruction sometimes fails to provide learners with ample opportunities for the internalization and automatization of implicit knowledge is a cause of concern since it is this type of knowledge that underlies the ability to communicate in the TL. Logically, the development of implicit knowledge mainly involves implicit and incidental learning, although, as will be recalled from the discussion of the Noticing Hypothesis, this learning mode also requires a certain degree of attention understood either as *non-conscious registration* (Tomlin and Villa 1994) or *conscious perception* (Schmidt 2001). Since learners' implicit knowledge is composed of both exemplars and abstract rules, it stands to reason that the two components are built by means of the operation of very different processes. It seems at least very likely that the acquisition of lexical items and formulaic expressions mainly proceeds by means of implicit associative learning postulated in connectionist approaches. On the other hand, because the learning of exemplars is not subject to developmental constraints, it is equally possible that learners consciously consign them to memory and, as predicted by skill-learning (DeKeyser 2001) or item-based (Schneider and Detweiler 1988) theories, with time, such chunks become automatized through practice. While this assumption is not universally accepted, even more conflicting views exist regarding the development of the abstract rule component. Most researchers seem to agree that, contrary to what is suggested by the Input Hypothesis, comprehending input is insufficient for acquisition since "it is clear that ESL/EFL students can use top down-processing to understand the

general meaning of input without needing to understand all of the grammar forms and vocabulary" (Fotos 2001: 271). In other words, successful comprehension only requires *semantic processing* rather than *syntactic* or *linguistic processing* of the input data which is necessary if interlanguage change is to be effected (Swain 1985; Sharwood-Smith 1986; Gass 1997; Gass and Selinker 2001).

Ellis (1997) argues that if some aspects of the input are to be integrated into the implicit knowledge store, the learner needs to perform the following three operations:

- 1) noticing a specific feature in the input;
- 2) comparing it with his or her own L2 output and detecting mismatches;
- 3) constructing new hypotheses in order to internalize the form.

In Doughty's (2001) terminology, the first two of these (i.e. noticing and internal comparison) represent *cognitive microprocesses* that are amenable to external manipulation, while the third is an ongoing automatic *macroprocess* of mapping and restructuring which is impervious to outside influences (see section 3.3.3. above).<sup>14</sup>

Similarly to other cognitive accounts (e.g. VanPatten 1996; Fotos 2001; Gass and Selinker 2001), the model posits that before input can be integrated into implicit knowledge, it first needs to be transformed into intake, which means that some language forms have to be attended to and placed in the short- or medium-term memory store. While it remains controversial whether noticing involves a conscious process or mere registration of stimuli, there is a consensus that directing learners' attention to a particular form in the input may be facilitated by:

- task demands (e.g. the amount of time available);
- frequency (e.g. pronouns are more frequent in classroom input than conditionals);

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<sup>14</sup> Although specific labels may vary, all cognitive theories envisage internal input processing in a very similar way and they are most likely to differ with regard to the role that Universal Grammar plays in the process. In Gass (1997) and Gass and Selinker (2001), for example, UG principles and parameters are hypothesized to be one of the factors which determine whether or not comprehended input becomes intake for subsequent integration.



- unusual features (e.g. an unexpected usage of an already internalized structure);
- salience (e.g. third person '-s' is less prominent than possessive adjectives);
- interactional modifications in negotiated sequences (e.g. a request for clarification when the teacher fails to understand);
- existing L2 knowledge (e.g. similarity to a known pattern);
- L1 knowledge (e.g. a form may contrast with an L1 equivalent used to express a similar meaning), a factor that Ellis fails to consider.

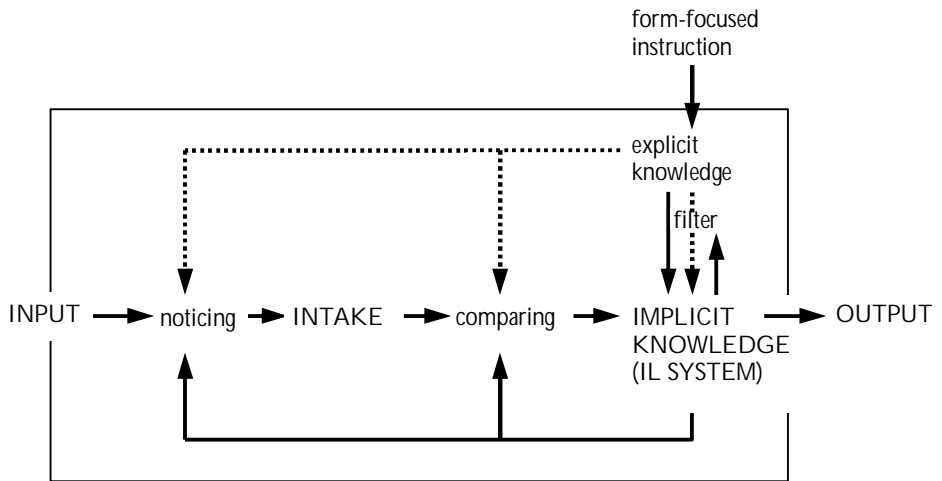
Once a particular language item is attended to and makes its way into the intake component, the learner has to compare it with the existing interlanguage representation, an operation that has been differentially referred to as *matching* (Klein 1986), *noticing gaps and holes* (Schmidt and Frota 1986; Swain 1998) or *cognitive comparison* (Doughty 2001). Again, although there is little agreement as to the degree of consciousness involved in this process, it is widely accepted that an internal comparison is indispensable for integration to take place. Still, it can be aided externally, as when teachers provide corrective feedback in tasks whose overriding emphasis is on message communication, thus focusing on *form* rather than *forms* (see Chapter One, section 1.1.).

In the final stage, the language data obtained through the microprocesses of noticing and comparing are available for integration into the IL system. While this operation is likely to proceed relatively smoothly in the case of discrete items which can be simply added to the implicit knowledge store, it is much more complex and difficult when it comes to system learning as, in some situations, this may entail massive restructuring of the whole system. In the first place, the learner has to be psycholinguistically ready to accommodate the new rule, although, as noted above, developmental readiness can be interpreted in different ways depending on whether acquisition is viewed in terms of comprehension or production. If the feature is within the learner's grasp or it is not subject to developmental constraints, it can be instantaneously integrated, but, presumably, this process will be easier and more rapid when the rule is simply added to the system and does not necessitate any restructuring of the existing representation. On the other hand,

when the initially processed information in the intake component cannot be used in hypothesis revision and interlanguage modification, it may either be entirely lost or put into storage as explicit knowledge until the learner reaches the requisite stage, or further evidence is forthcoming. As is the case with noticing and mental comparison, there is little agreement as to whether integration requires consciousness, as visible in the contrasting positions adopted by Reber (1989) or Tomlin and Villa (1994), on the one hand, and Schmidt (2001) or DeKeyser (2003), on the other. Additionally, some researchers do not discount the possibility that integration is not entirely input-driven and may be mediated by the operation of UG (Gass and Selinker 2001), a position that finds some support in projection studies (see section 3.2.3. above).

### *Contributions of form-focused instruction*

Now that the processes responsible for the development of explicit and implicit knowledge have been elucidated, it is time to look more closely at the relationship between the two and the ways in which they can be impacted by instruction, an issue that is of paramount importance to any theory of instructed language learning. As explained earlier in this section and diagrammatically depicted in Figure 3.4., the weak interface position states that, although explicit knowledge cannot automatically convert into implicit knowledge, it still plays a very significant, albeit frequently indirect, role in its growth. For one thing, as even connectionists are inclined to acknowledge, it may function as an advance organizer and help learners notice specific features in the input, particularly those that are non-salient and largely redundant from the point of view of successful communication. Another benefit is that the explicit representation developed by means of FFI "may sensitize the language processor so that it takes account of data available in the input and is more able to undertake an adequate analysis" (Ellis 1997: 123-124), with the effect that learners are better equipped to conduct internal cognitive comparisons and notice the gaps or holes in their interlanguages. In both cases, then, the impact of explicit knowledge is believed to be indirect, which indicates that the facilitative effects of FFI may be deferred rather than immediate, a position that is in keeping with the claims of the Delayed-Effect Hypothesis (see section 3.3.4. above).



*Figure 3.4. The role of explicit knowledge in second language acquisition (Ellis 1997: 123).*

As regards more direct contributions of instruction, they are visible in the case of forms learners are ready to acquire, such that are not developmentally constrained as well as lexical units of different kinds which can be accessed more and more rapidly as a result of practice. Yet another important benefit of pedagogic intervention, the value of which can hardly be overestimated, is its aforementioned ability to automatize aspects of explicit and implicit knowledge, which frees up the limited attentional resources for action planning and the processing of other incoming forms. However, while the attainment of the former goal is possible through the application of traditional controlled grammar practice activities, the latter requires the deployment of implicit knowledge under real-operating conditions. In other words, if we want learners to consciously restructure their explicit system and deploy a form quickly and accurately in monitored performance, such as that required on a grammar test, traditional exercises may do the trick. Conversely, when the aim is to develop our students' ability to use a feature confidently and accurately in spontaneous performance, such as that called for in communicative tasks, it is necessary to provide them with opportunities for genuine communication and supply them with timely and appropriate negative evidence.

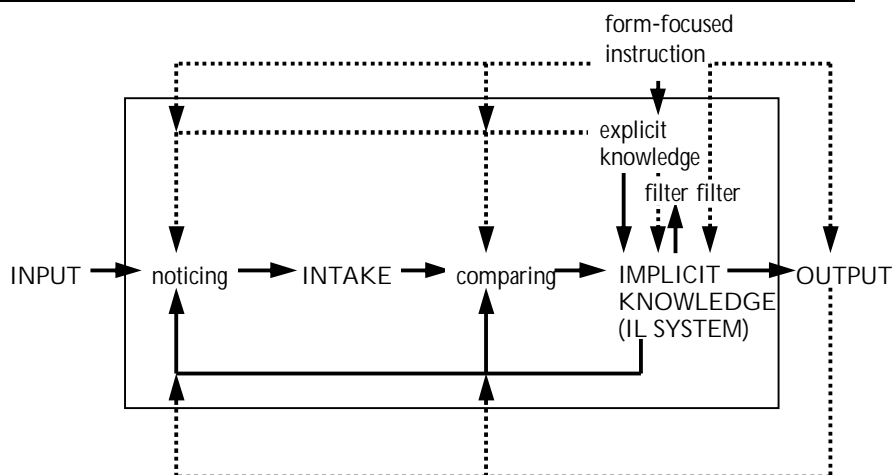


Figure 3.5. An extended perspective on the role of form-focused instruction.

Although the present author largely concurs with Ellis's account of the relationship between explicit and implicit knowledge, he believes that the model presented in Figure 3.4. is too limited with respect to the contributions of form-focused instruction. This is because, taking into account the theoretical proposals discussed in section 3.3. above, it can reasonably be argued that in some situations FFI may directly influence input processing, thus contributing to the development of implicit knowledge without having to pass through the explicit knowledge store. This possibility is illustrated in Figure 3.5. and, in fact, has been partly acknowledged by Ellis in his most recent writings (e.g. Ellis 2006). In all likelihood, however, such an effect is only possible when the intervention is of the *focus on form type* (Long 1991), which means that it cannot be overly intrusive and should be provided when learners are engaged in conveying real meanings and messages.

For example, learners could be given texts where the target feature is graphically enhanced (i.e. input enhancement) or provided with structured input of the kind explored by VanPatten (2002), both of which can facilitate the operation of noticing and pave the way for internal comparisons. Alternatively, they could be supplied with a recast following their erroneous utterance within the cognitive window of opportunity (Doughty and Williams 1998c), which would enable them to notice the gaps in their interlanguages and set in motion the macroprocesses of integration and restructuring. Yet

another way of attaining the same goal might be following Swain's (1985) proposal that, as they are attempting to communicate, learners should be pushed to produce output that is accurate, coherent and precise. Somewhat more controversially, a similar effect could be accomplished by means of scaffolding students' contributions during interaction in the ZPD, which is in line with the tenets of Sociocultural Theory. Finally, as Ellis (1997) himself admits, learners' production can serve as auto-input to the system responsible for processing implicit knowledge and be reanalyzed in the process of syntacticalization (cf. Skehan 1998). Obviously, the beneficial effect of intervention cannot be taken for granted (hence the broken lines) and there are grounds to believe that the same filter which prevents some features from being moved from explicit to implicit knowledge continues to operate and blocks out the rules learners are not ready to acquire. There exists a possibility, however, that the constraints only apply to the implicit knowledge of a structure in terms of learners' ability to successfully deploy it in unplanned discourse, and may not affect their capacity to process it for comprehension (cf. Buczowska and Weist 1991).

### *Other considerations*

Moving on to the components of the theory that are not directly related to the explicit/implicit distinction and the role of FFI, Ellis (1997) admits that, similarly to naturalistic acquisition, classroom language learning can be affected by students' world knowledge and their mother tongue. As far as the former is concerned, L2 learners can use the content schemata they have at their disposal to facilitate top-down processing, infer the meanings and contextual uses of language forms as well as develop their strategic competence. However, as mentioned above, excessive reliance on top-down processing may preclude learners from noticing structural elements in the input and result in their stabilizing in the use of inaccurate forms. On a somewhat different tack, concentrating on semantic and contextual clues at the expense of syntactic processing may stymie successful passage from lexicalization to syntacticalization (see section 3.3.8. above). As for L1 knowledge, there is currently a consensus that, as Spada and Lightbown (2002: 125-126) illuminate, "(...) L1 influence is a subtle and evolving aspect of L2 development. Learners do not simply transfer all patterns from their L1 to

the L2, and there are changes over time (...)"'. In the case of TL grammar, the occurrence and scope of transfer is likely to be a function of "the learner's stage of development, the degree of similarity between the target and native language rule, conformity to universal operating principles, language-specific tendencies in the target language, the degree of markedness of the L1 rule and the target language rule it is seeking to replace, and the perceived magnitude of distance between the two languages" (Ellis 1997: 127). There is also evidence to suggest that cross-linguistic evidence is less evident in learners who receive formal instruction as opposed to those who pick up the L2 in what Odlin (1989) describes as *unfocused contexts*.

Finally, for the sake of completeness, a few comments are in order on the nature of L2 performance. When it comes to comprehension, Ellis's theory is informed by Færch and Kasper's (1986) model, according to which comprehending messages involves the integration of verbal and non-verbal input, the linguistic and world knowledge listeners possess as well as contextual information. They view comprehension as a *matching process* that relies on both bottom-up and top-down processing, as dictated by the nature of the task, and *inferencing procedures* deployed whenever gaps appear, with the effect that understanding is seldom complete and involves a *reasonable interpretation*. Such a view challenges Krashen's claim that acquisition is comprehension-driven and suggests that learning formal aspects of the TL is more likely to occur when the learner fails to comprehend what is being said, which forces him to switch to bottom-up, grammatical processing and pay closer attention to the input data.

As far as production is concerned, Ellis argues that, contrary to Krashen's (1985) claims, learner output can be initiated in both the explicit and implicit knowledge store, although he admits that true communicative efficiency calls for the utilization of automated implicit knowledge. While Skehan (1998) is right in claiming that near native-like performance necessitates the development of a parallel rule-governed and memory-based system, it is unlikely that many learners will ever even advance too far in the stage of syntacticalization and, therefore, they may continually rely on lexical phrases and strategic competence to get their messages across. In fact, it could be argued that for many learners in foreign language contexts it is automatized explicit knowledge that underlies message

conveyance, which is evident in the fact that such students will not be able to say anything when they do not have sufficient time to plan their output. Obviously, norm-oriented learners will monitor their utterances irrespective of whether they are originated by implicit or explicit knowledge, and, following Ellis, it can be accepted that this operation can be performed not only by the explicit system but also with the assistance of sufficiently controlled tacit knowledge.

### *Evaluation*

Summing up, the value of the theory put forward by Ellis (1997) lies in the fact that not only does it endeavor to bring together the different theoretical perspectives discussed in this chapter but also serves as a point of reference for concrete and practicable recommendations for classroom practice. Obviously, any theoretical model has to be updated in response to the latest research findings and sometimes adapted to be applicable to learning contexts for which it may not have been initially intended. This is exactly what the present author has sought to do in the present section by spelling out the ways in which form-focused instruction can contribute to the development of implicit knowledge, elaborating on the extent to which foreign language learners can be expected to internalize and fall back upon the two systems, and attempting to provide alternative explanations of some phenomena in terms of such recent theoretical approaches as connectionism. It can be argued that, as a result of these alterations, the original model has gained in precision, coherence and applicability, and, as such, it constitutes a solid basis for making pedagogical proposals suitable for the foreign language classroom, a task that will be undertaken in the remaining parts of the present work.

Clearly, the model is not immune from criticism since it is not the only account of instructed language learning possible, it represents the computational metaphor and, for the most part, ignores the social dimension of the learning process (Block 2003). Additionally, it does not aspire to take into account individual learner differences, such as motivation, aptitude or learning styles and strategies, which are bound to impinge not only on the rate of learning and ultimate success achieved, but may also inform decisions about the amount, scope, timing and type of FFI most

appropriate for a particular group of learners. While such limitations have to be acknowledged, the theory provides, in the opinion of the author, one of the most convincing, cogent and coherent explanations of how instructed learners go about developing their target language grammatical competence and, therefore, it appears to be perfectly suited to inform the discussion of the role of form-focused instruction in the Polish educational context.

## Conclusion

In the opening paragraph of the present chapter an assertion was made that it is possible to learn much of the L2 incidentally without ever getting familiarized with the rules of grammar and spending hours working on hundreds of tedious grammatical exercises. Without doubt, this holds true for naturalistic learners provided they have sufficient high quality exposure to the TL, they are afforded opportunities for meaningful communication and, somewhat more controversially, they have not passed the critical period. However, recognizing the fact that acquisition can occur without the benefit of FFI is not tantamount to conceding that this is the best option for all learners and that this process cannot be improved upon through some kind of pedagogic intervention. In fact, such reasoning would be seriously flawed, as Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991: 304-305) make plain in their insightful comment on the proposal that classroom language learning should mirror the conditions of naturalistic acquisition:

(...) it is assumed that a program with (what Krashen and Terrell believe to be) the necessary and sufficient characteristics for successful language learning is automatically the most efficient/effective program possible. Yet, this is patently untrue. It is equivalent to claiming that because some plants will grow in a desert, watering the ones in your garden is a waste of time. In fact, of course, while the desert may provide the minimum conditions for a plant to grow, watering it may help it grow faster, bigger and stronger, that is to realize its full potential. So with language learning; while comprehensible input may be necessary and sufficient for SLA, instruction may simplify the learning task, alter the processes and sequences of acquisition, speed up the rate of acquisition and improve the quality and level of SL ultimate attainment.



In keeping with this sensible position, an attempt has been undertaken to offer copious evidence for the beneficial effects of form-focused instruction and to make a case for including it in the language curriculum on pedagogical, empirical and theoretical grounds. In order to achieve this goal, the limitations of purely experiential approaches were discussed in terms of the nature of classroom interaction, the quality of learner output, students' needs and preferences, pedagogical considerations as well as contextual factors. The subsequent section was intended as an overview of the empirical investigations aiming to explore the effects of grammar teaching, and was followed by a presentation and evaluation of a number of theoretical models which recognize a vitally important contribution of FFI to classroom language learning. Finally, the various theoretical positions were brought together in the discussion of Ellis's (1997) model of instructed language learning which was amended to reflect the latest research findings and become applicable to the foreign language context.

The obvious conclusion that can be drawn from the in-depth exploration of such issues is that not only does form-focused instruction enhance the overall effectiveness of classroom language learning, but it may also be a necessity in some contexts, particularly when learners aim to go beyond mere communicative ability and attain high accuracy levels. In the first place, language classrooms usually fail to constitute acquisition-rich environments and even immersion programs tend to produce learners who can communicate effectively but do so inaccurately and inappropriately. Given that even tens of hours of meaningful exposure a week over the period of many years is inadequate to result in a balanced development of all aspects of TL communicative competence, it is wishful thinking to believe that this goal can ever be achieved in foreign language classrooms, where the amount of L2 exposure is scant, to say the least. In such situations, FFI appears to be indispensable if acquisition is to take place, which is not to deny in the least the paramount need for meaning and message communication that is the main causative factor in the development of implicit knowledge. Also, research findings have shown that although code-centered instruction is powerless to affect acquisition orders and sequences, it can accelerate the learning process and contribute to greater accuracy in both monitored and free production, and, what is of vital importance, its effects are durable. Last but not least,

ensuring the occurrence of a more or less explicit focus on specific TL features can also be justified on theoretical grounds since most researchers concur that limited attentional resources preclude learners from simultaneously attending to form and meaning, with the latter invariably getting prioritized in real-time processing.

In all probability, if teachers working in foreign language contexts such as the Polish one were to be told in some workshop that teaching grammar is necessary, they would look at each other in disbelief at such a revelation and start thinking that they must be wasting their time listening to someone who is stating the obvious. Most of them would probably say that they are fully aware that FFI is a must but they would like somebody to tell them why it does not work in so many cases and what can be done to boost its effectiveness. In other words, they would be interested to find out how and when grammar should be taught as well as what linguistic features should be focused upon. Unfortunately, no easy answers and fool-proof recommendations are forthcoming because, as the foregoing discussion should have illuminated, there exist conflicting views with regard to which types of instruction are most beneficial, how language lessons should best be organized, and what status grammar teaching should be accorded in the curriculum. It is such contentious but undoubtedly vital issues that will be the main concern of the following chapter.

## *Chapter Four*

# Exploring options in form-focused instruction

## Introduction

As the discussion in the preceding chapter illustrated, there are solid grounds to believe that form-focused instruction may constitute an important or perhaps even indispensable element of classroom language learning. Since the main pedagogical, empirical and theoretical considerations in support of such an assumption have already been explored, suffice it to say at this point that numerous research findings show that pedagogic intervention is likely to assist language development, even though it may be unable to disrupt the natural processes of acquisition. On a more theoretical level, it has been argued that placing a sole emphasis on message conveyance is inadequate as such an approach may produce learners who are capable of getting their ideas across, but do so with little concern for accuracy, appropriateness and precision. Last but not least, FFI may be a necessity in the case of postpubescent learners, especially in settings where TL exposure is scant and high levels of accuracy are viewed as prerequisite for academic, vocational and professional advancement. Given such formidable arguments, most applied linguists would probably agree with a comment from Burgess and Etherington (2002: 433) who write: "Grammar is being rehabilitated (...) and recognized for what it has always been (...): an essential, inescapable component of language use and language learning. Few would dispute nowadays that teaching and learning with a focus on form is valuable, if not indispensable".

Valid as such a stance undoubtedly is, it would be of little value in and of itself if it were not accompanied by comprehensive guidelines on how drawing learners' attention to language forms can best be accomplished, but, sadly, this is the area where consensus is unlikely to be built in the foreseeable future. While it is true that in the last 15 years or so researchers have shifted their attention to examining the relative benefits of different *types* of FFI instruction (Norris and Ortega 2000; Doughty 2001; Ellis 2001b, 2004a), the only thing they seem to agree upon is that teachers should not revert

to traditional code-centered teaching, but, rather, strive to combine a focus on form and meaning in one way or another. However, such general recommendations are clearly insufficient to serve as a basis for effective language pedagogy and they are of dubious value to practitioners who are often oblivious to the considerable controversy surrounding grammar teaching. In effect, they either flatly reject research-based solutions as irrelevant to classroom practice or, even worse, uncritically embrace proposals that are limited in scope and patently inapplicable to the educational contexts in which they work (Ellis 2006).

What needs to be done, then, is to offer a set of research-derived but practicable guidelines upon which teachers can draw in planning their lessons and curricula, and the effectiveness of which they can verify in their own classrooms. For one thing, it appears necessary to devise a comprehensive taxonomy of FFI techniques and procedures as well as to assess their utility in terms of contextual factors and, wherever research findings are available, individual learner differences. As a result, not only would teachers become aware of the range of options they have at their disposal, but also obtain a basic grounding in the potential value and applicability of, say, production practice, direct explanations or different types of corrective feedback. Equally important is the question of whether instruction should predominantly be based on a structural syllabus and the PPP procedure, or, rather, the strong variant of task-based learning where a linguistic focus only arises in response to learner need. Also relevant is the choice of structures to be taught as well as the issue of the most valid way of tapping learners' grammatical competence.

The aim of the present chapter is to provide an exhaustive and up-to-date overview of the methodological options in such areas, explore their relative value in terms of most recent theoretical positions and research findings as well as to assess their feasibility in foreign language settings as represented by the Polish educational context. The first part of the chapter will be devoted to the presentation and evaluation of the various techniques and procedures that can be used in teaching formal aspects of language, which will be henceforth collectively referred to as *microoptions*. Subsequently, the focus of attention will be shifted to the discussion of the planning and curricular decisions and their significance for the provision of FFI. Such higher-level methodological choices will be called

*macrooptions*, and the main emphasis will be placed on the competing alternatives in planning, organizing and conducting grammar-based lessons and lesson sequences, the potential contributions of the structural and task-based syllabuses, and the variables informing the selection of TL features to be focused upon. In the last section, an attempt will be undertaken to explore the different ways in which grammatical ability can be measured and make recommendations in this area. Although, mostly due to the paucity of relevant studies, there is no separate section dealing with the relationship between learners' characteristics and preferences and the selection of instructional options, such issues will also be touched upon whenever deemed appropriate and necessary.

#### 4.1. Microoptions in form-focused instruction

Since the beginning of the 1990s there has been growing dissatisfaction with the concept of *method* in language teaching as too crude and restricted to provide a sound basis for either effective (i.e. principled and context-sensitive) instruction or illuminating (i.e. producing conclusive results) empirical investigations. As a consequence, language pedagogy has been gradually moving towards the *postmethod condition* which conceptualizes language teaching in terms of specific instructional options (Kumaravadivelu 1994). A well-known early attempt to proceed beyond the concept of method and provide a coherent classification of tangible pedagogic solutions was undertaken by Stern (1992), who distinguished between *teaching strategies* (i.e. concerning specific instructional practices), *timing strategies* (i.e. connected with the number of classes and their distribution) and *social strategies* (i.e. related to group size and composition as well as the extent to which instruction is teacher- or learner-centered) which can combine in various ways and "manifest themselves in all kinds of different techniques and activities" (1992: 31). A more recent conceptualization of pedagogical choices is offered by Kumaravadivelu (2001, 2002, 2005) who envisages *postmethod pedagogy* as a three-dimensional system resting on the parameters of *particularity* (i.e. pedagogy needs to respect local exigencies), *practicality* (i.e. teachers need to generate their personal theories of practice) and *possibility* (i.e. pedagogy needs to take into account social and historical conditions). He also enumerates ten

general operating principles, or *macrostrategies*, which should guide teachers in constructing their own theories of practice and selecting specific *microstrategies* most suitable for a particular setting.

In view of such general tendencies, it appears to be fully warranted to attempt to devise taxonomies of instructional options with regard to different language skills and subsystems, form-focused instruction being no exception. Such pedagogic alternatives can be considered in terms of planning and curricular decisions, which could be labeled *macroptions*, or specific classroom techniques and procedures, which can be referred to as *microoptions*, and are the main focus of the present section. In the last decade or so several proposals of this kind have been drawn up, but most of them have been limited in scope and failed to keep abreast of the latest developments in SLA theory and research, with the effect that the taxonomies put forward are often one-sided and imprecise. One extreme, which is invariably promulgated in numerous methodology handbooks (e.g. Ur 1996; Hedge 2000), is to view grammar teaching as involving the *focus-on-forms approach* (Long 1991) and list a number of presentation and practice techniques, the latter of which typically being ordered from the most to the least controlled. In contrast, the adherents of the *focus-on-form position* (Long 1991) have a propensity for excluding such options altogether and concentrating on techniques ensuring simultaneous or sequential integration of form, meaning and use (e.g. Doughty and Williams 1998c). A more balanced stance is evident in Stern's (1992) account of teaching strategies where a range of options representing *analytic/experiential* and *explicit/implicit* dimensions is presented and a persuasive case is mounted for viewing them as complementary rather than mutually exclusive. However, this taxonomy is also incomplete and inadequate as it was proposed well over a decade ago and, as such, it cannot accommodate more recent proposals.

The researcher who has managed to reconcile the diverse theoretical perspectives and to provide the most detailed, comprehensive and coherent taxonomies of methodological options in FFI is Rod Ellis. In his view, one plausible way of classifying the different alternatives is according to the points at which they are believed to intervene in interlanguage development as represented by the computational metaphor of acquisition such as that discussed in section 3.4. of the previous chapter (Ellis 1998). Thus, it is possible to distinguish between techniques which are directed at

enhancing the salience of input evidence (e.g. processing instruction), developing explicit knowledge (e.g. rule explanation), creating opportunities to produce the targeted feature (e.g. sentence completion) and providing corrective feedback on students' output (e.g. overtly identifying the error). Alternatively, we could categorize various instructional options depending on the attentional focus of instruction (i.e. meaning or form) as well as its distribution (i.e. extensive vs. intensive). In effect, production practice involving a specific structure would represent a focus on forms which can only be planned and intensive by definition, input enhancement would exemplify planned and intensive focus on form, and corrective feedback directed at a range of features would permit unplanned and extensive focus on form (Ellis 2001b; Ellis, Basturkmen and Loewen 2002). Insightful as they are, the two classifications will not inform the following discussion since the divisions between different categories are not always clear-cut (e.g. feedback can also be employed to develop explicit knowledge and it can be both planned and unplanned). In addition, the latter taxonomy seems to be more suited to the discussion of macrooptions in FFI and, as such, will be considered at length in section 4.2.1. below.

Given the inadequacies of the taxonomies mentioned thus far, the following overview of microoptions in FFI draws upon Ellis's (1997) earlier classification which seems to be the most wide-ranging, fine-grained and reflective of the teaching practices employed in language classrooms. The taxonomy is built around a distinction between *learner-performance options* and *feedback options*, where the former can be defined as "the various devices available to the teacher for eliciting different learner behaviors that include the use of a specific grammatical feature" whereas the latter refer to "the various devices available for providing learners with information regarding their use of a specific grammatical feature" (1997: 78). As depicted in Figure 4.1., the two broad categories are then subdivided into more delicate distinctions at varying levels of abstraction, which, in turn, provide a basis for specifying actual classroom techniques and activities.

What should be pointed out is that although the model mirrors in all important respects the one originally put forward by Ellis (1997), it is a somewhat simplified version thereof proposed by

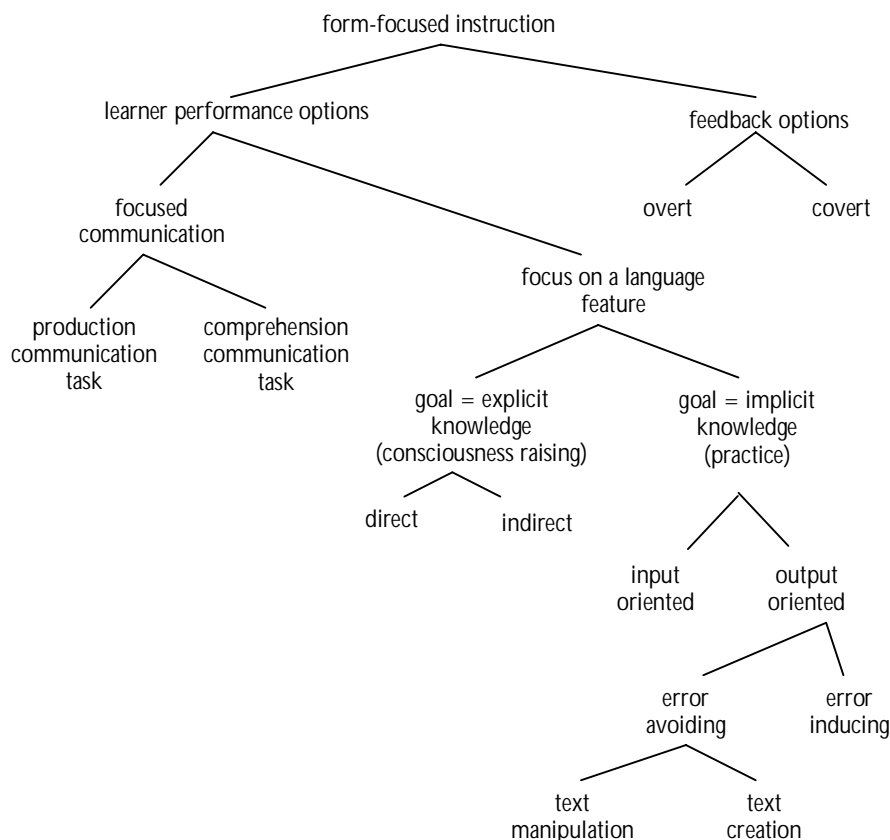


Figure 4.1. *Microoptions in form-focused instruction (adapted from Pawlak 2004g: 275, based on Ellis 1997: 79).*

the present author (Pawlak 2004g), where several categories have been scrapped and others given new but, arguably, more precise labels. In what follows, the main emphasis will be laid on evaluating the various microoptions against the backdrop of the latest empirical findings and theoretical positions as well as assessing their utility in foreign language contexts such as our own. Additionally, wherever possible and warranted, comments will be made on how a specific option fits in with learners' characteristics or preferences.



#### 4.1.1. Learner performance options

*Learner performance options* include all the tasks and activities which focus on a preselected linguistic feature or a set of such features, and are designed with the purpose of familiarizing students with the relevant rule, providing them with opportunities to practice the form(s) in a more or less deliberate manner, or, which is perhaps the norm in most grammar lessons, contributing to both of these aims to some degree. Consequently, the term applies in equal measure to situations where the teacher provides metalinguistic explanations, asks learners to do translation exercises, or sets tasks which call for more unplanned use of the feature in question. What follows from such a characterization is that, irrespective of the techniques and procedures selected, this approach represents Stern's (1992) *analytic strategy* and has to be carefully distinguished from *experiential* or *entirely meaning-focused instruction*.

The fine-grained divisions depicted diagrammatically in Figure 4.1. above indicate that learner performance options can further be broken down into *focused communication tasks* and *feature-focused activities*. While the former are intended to direct learners' attention to specific linguistic features as they are engaged in meaning and message communication, the latter entail isolation of grammatical properties, tend to depend on a structural syllabus, and are based on the more or less tacit assumption that L2 acquisition is a process of *accumulating entities* (Rutherford 1987). In fact, such a choice mirrors Long's (1991) distinction between a *focus on form* and a *focus on forms* (see Chapter One, section 1.1.), and it can be related to the concepts of *incidental* and *intentional learning* as well as *implicit* and *explicit instruction* (see Chapter Three, section 3.3.).

Similarly to meaning-centered teaching, focused communication tasks mainly promote incidental learning, even though learners are encouraged to occasionally shift their attention to linguistic features. In contrast, when the teacher opts for a feature-focused activity, the aim is to cater for intentional learning since students are fully aware that they are expected to internalize or gain greater control of the rule in question (cf. Ellis 1997). By the same token, it could be argued that encouraging focused communication represents implicit grammar instruction whereas getting students to discover a rule or practice a specific structure is typical of explicit

grammar teaching. Such labels, however, are much more problematic in view of the fact that it is possible to distinguish different levels of explicitness and implicitness among feature-focused options. It will also become clear in the following discussion that useful as all such generalizations may be in imposing order on the multitude of FFI techniques and procedures, it is often not the inherent design features but, rather, task implementation and performance that determine whether implicit or explicit learning takes place. Keeping all of this in mind, we can now turn to a more in-depth presentation and evaluation of the two main categories as well as the concrete microoptions they encompass.

#### 4.1.1.1. Focused communication tasks

*Focused communication tasks*, also referred to as *structure-oriented tasks* (Loschky and Bley-Vroman 1993) or *implicit structure-based tasks* (Fotos 2002) can be defined as teaching activities which are designed in such a way that learners' attention is directed to formal aspects of the TL as they are primarily engaged in message conveyance. For obvious reasons, the application of such tasks invariably requires the preselection of specific linguistic features as part of a broader instructional sequence or in response to persistent learner problems, and it can involve either production or comprehension of such features (cf. Ellis 1997; Skehan 1998; Ellis 2003). Irrespective of whether the main emphasis is placed on production or reception, if an activity is to count as a focused communication task, students should not be instructed to deploy a particular structure in its performance nor should they be informed of the intended linguistic focus in any other way. In other words, while such activities aim to elicit productive or receptive use of a feature, they must meet the main criteria of purely *communication-driven* or *unfocused* tasks, such as the primacy of message content and meaning exchange, a relationship to comparable real-world activities, freedom to choose the linguistic and non-linguistic resources as well as assessment in terms of communicative outcomes (Skehan 1998; Ellis 2003). Obviously, ensuring that such design features are in place cannot guarantee that learners will in fact choose to focus on meaning rather than form since, particularly the more proficient ones, may identify the hidden instructional agenda and rely on their explicit knowledge, thus thwarting the teacher's intention to cater for incidental and implicit learning.

### *Production-based focused communication tasks*

Due to their superior potential for expanding and automatizing learners' existing implicit knowledge, *production-based focused communication tasks* are much more commonly used than comprehension-oriented ones, even though designing activities of this kind poses a formidable challenge. In their often-cited and influential paper, Loschky and Bley-Vroman (1993) distinguish between three types of structure-oriented relationships depending on the expected degree of involvement of a particular language feature in task completion. In *task-naturalness*, learners can be expected to employ the form naturally, but its utilization is not necessary and some alternative structures could be equally effective in accomplishing the communicative goal set. For instance, exchanging information about travel itineraries is likely to naturally trigger the use of the present simple tense (e.g. 'She arrives in Boston at 6'), but other ways of expressing the future (e.g. 'will' or 'going to') would be equally well-suited to do the job. The second type of relationship is called *task-utility*, and although, in this case, task completion is also possible through the application of alternative linguistic resources or communication strategies, the use of the targeted feature renders it easier and more efficient. Such a situation is exemplified by an information-gap activity requiring learners to exchange information about two cities and compare them (Fotos 1998, 2002), which can be performed without recourse to comparative and superlative forms, but their employment simplifies the task and positively influences its outcomes. Finally, the last way of incorporating a linguistic focus into communicative activities is *task essentialness* in which attaining a solution hinges upon the use of a specific grammatical construction, a criterion that, in the opinion of Loschky and Bley-Vroman (1993), is the most difficult to meet. However, it is also the most desirable as only in this way can task performance be expected to trigger hypothesis-formation and testing, generate opportunities for feedback and, ultimately, foster interlanguage change.

While designing tasks requiring the use of a specific linguistic feature may appear to be relatively easy if one is an adherent of the *strong-interface position*, it is immeasurably more difficult when such tasks are intended to lead directly to implicit grammar learning. This is because, once pedagogic tasks of this kind constitute an element

in a sequence of lessons devoted to teaching and practicing a particular point of grammar or the learners are directed to employ the targeted feature when completing them, there is a danger that their focal attention will be shifted from message conveyance to concerns with accuracy and complexity. In effect, in some situations, the activity could lose its communicative character and be transformed into a situational grammar exercise (Ellis 2003). On the other hand, keeping learners in the dark about the true purpose of the task, if at all possible, may turn out to be a futile attempt as even when the use of a TL form is putatively indispensable, they may still produce it infrequently, opting instead for a range of communication strategies or grammatical structures which may be less appropriate but equally effective in getting messages across.

Given that the presumably most advantageous requirement of task-essentialness is so difficult to accomplish in practice, it should be hardly surprising that its feasibility has been put to the empirical test in a number of studies. One such investigation was carried out by Tuz (1993), who employed a structure-oriented task as the last element of a procedure designed to create practice opportunities in the ordering of attributive adjectives and found that only one of the six subjects actually employed the feature. In another pertinent study, Sterlacci (1996) used a problem-solving task to elicit modal verbs for offering advice and determined that 83% of students' suggestions contained at least one instance of such forms. Although this finding indicates that achieving task essentialness is not mission impossible, the fact that the activity involved producing written output raises the possibility that the subjects drew upon their explicit knowledge to attain the desired communicative outcome. A research project carried out by Mackey (1999) also showed that communicative tasks (e.g. story completion, picture sequencing, etc.) resulted in the subjects making conscious attempts to use the targeted feature (i.e. various question forms), although their output was not always targetlike. Despite the fact that the picture that emerges from such research endeavors is a complex one, it can tentatively be assumed that task-essentialness is feasible in the case of some linguistic features (e.g. modals) but not others (e.g. noun phrases with multiple adjectives), and that successful elicitation of the target form may be a function of developmental readiness and individual learner variation (cf. Ellis 2003). In addition, although such tasks can indeed trigger incidental learning, it is not clear

whether they foster implicit learning since learners seem to be adroit at falling back upon their explicit memories in producing particular forms.

Since making the use of specific grammatical constructions an integral component of an otherwise communicative activity poses considerable difficulty and its success depends on a host of variables, it is perhaps wishful thinking to believe that classroom teachers with little or no grounding in SLA can ever be equal to this intricate task. Therefore, it has been suggested that, in addition to manipulating design features, the likelihood of learners attending to a linguistic feature can be increased methodologically through corrective feedback or brief periods of explicit instruction prior to the activity, instructional strategies that can be viewed as variants of *reactive* and *preemptive focus on form*, respectively (see section 4.2.1. below). An interesting procedure which employs the former is *interaction enhancement* (IE), which has been proposed by Muranoi (2000) and constitutes an extension of DiPietro's (1987) *strategic interaction*. It consists of the following three phases:

- 1) *rehearsal phase*, where students work in pairs to interactively solve a problem outlined in a scenario containing many obligatory contexts for the target form;
- 2) *performance phase*, in which the scenario is performed by the teacher and one of the students in front of the entire class; the errors involving the target form are followed by requests for repetition that serve as input enhancement (i.e. they flag the incorrect form) as well as output enhancement (i.e. they push the learner to self-correct), and corrective recasts are used when the student fails to repeat the correct form;
- 3) *debriefing phase*, where the interaction is evaluated in terms of the accuracy of use of the targeted form (i.e. direct explanations can be supplied) and the communicative goals reached (i.e. the precision with which the meanings were conveyed is assessed).

Muranoi (2000) used the procedure in a quasi-experiment focusing on indefinite articles and found that not only did it aid her Japanese subjects in restructuring their IL systems, but also that the gains were durable and the positive effect was projected on the learning of the less discursively marked definite article. As for employing preemptive focus on form to enhance the salience of targeted forms, it could entail directing learners' attention to such features before

they set about completing the task by, for example, posing such questions as 'Do you remember how we talk about the past in English?' or 'What does the verb *should* mean in this sentence?', making metalinguistic comments or providing brief explanations (cf. Samuda 2001).

### *Reception-based focused communication activities*

While getting students to attend to, process and use the targeted feature in production-based focused communication tasks remains problematic, this objective is relatively easy to achieve in the case of *reception-based focused communicative activities*, where "the input is contrived to induce noticing of predetermined forms" (Ellis 2003: 158). A good example of such a task can be found in a study by Doughty (1991) which examined the effect of instruction on English relativization. As part of the experimental treatment, the participants were requested to read a text seeded with examples of relative clauses as it appeared on a computer screen and, whenever they experienced difficulty understanding, they had the option of referring to an instructional window which provided assistance on lexis and sentence structure. Doughty (1991) found that the learners who completed this task outperformed those who had been provided with grammar rules on a text comprehension measure and did comparably well on a test which required them to generate relative clauses.

Also falling into the category of focused comprehension tasks are *input enrichment activities*, which provide learners with multiple opportunities to encounter the targeted feature (i.e. *input flooding*) or make it more prominent by means of graphological highlighting (i.e. *input enhancement*), as well as *input processing instruction*. However, such a categorization of these techniques is only warranted in situations when learners are unaware of their instructional focus and concentrate primarily on message conveyance. At the same time, it could easily be argued that such implicit devices are more effective when they are used as part of teaching sequences aimed at introducing, practicing or reviewing particular forms, perhaps in conjunction with more explicit FFI options. However, a detailed account thereof will be deferred till section 4.1.1.2.2., which specifically deals with the role of structured input and production practice in teaching implicit knowledge.

*Assessing the utility of focused communication tasks*

The discussion of focused communication tasks would surely be incomplete without an attempt to evaluate their effectiveness in helping learners gain greater control of grammatical structures and assess their usefulness in the foreign language classroom. As far as the first issue is concerned, Doughty's (1991) study suggests that comprehension-based activities of this kind may in fact improve learners' ability to understand the targeted features and facilitate their more accurate production. On the whole, however, there is a marked paucity of research in this area, particularly when it comes to production-oriented tasks, which is the inevitable corollary of the problems involved in getting students to actually produce a given structure. Some evidence for the beneficial effects of focused communication can be found in Mackey's (1999) research since participating in such activities enabled the subjects to progress along the developmental sequence in the acquisition of English questions. The situation looks much more promising with structure-oriented tasks where attention to language forms is achieved both through design and methodology, as is evident in the studies conducted by Nobuyoshi and Ellis (1993), Takashima and Ellis (1999) as well as the present author (Pawlak 2003a, 2004b). In all of these research projects, however, the learners were already familiar with the targeted form and, therefore, they cannot be said to have acquired it from scratch, but, rather, only to have succeeded in producing it in a more native-like manner. This seems to be in line with the stance adopted by Loschky and Bley-Vroman (1993), who argue that irrespective of whether production-based communicative tasks meet the naturalness, utility or essentialness criterion, they are unlikely to trigger the acquisition of new forms because learners cannot be expected to spontaneously employ structures that have not been internalized to some extent. Thus, it can reasonably be assumed that the main potential of such activities lies in providing learners with opportunities to automatize their existing implicit and explicit knowledge.

Obviously, if implicit rather than explicit learning is the aim, the engineered focus on form should be *internal* as well as *external* (Ellis, Basturkmen and Loewen 2001a). This, however, cannot be taken for granted since learners may frequently fail to attend to such morphological features as third person '-s' or articles, the omission

of which does not compromise the attainment of communicative goals (Ellis 1997). For the very same reason, it may be difficult to interactively direct students' attention to such areas of syntax as adjectival ordering, adverb placement and, perhaps, some verb and sentence patterns as well. Such assumptions have been supported in a study conducted by Mackey, Gass and McDonough (2000), who used simulated recall following a communication task and found that learners mostly reported noticing feedback on lexical, semantic and phonological features, with most morphosyntax apparently being unattended to. It is possible, though, that such limitations do not necessarily apply when intervention focuses on one or just a few forms and it is intensive rather than extensive. For instance, the present author (Pawlak 2003a) showed that focused communication eliciting third person '-s' combined with corrective feedback resulted not only in learners generating multiple instances of the feature but also long-term accuracy gains.

There can be little doubt that both productive and receptive structure-oriented tasks are a powerful instructional tool in any language classroom where the emphasis is laid not only on acquainting learners with relevant rules but also ensuring that they will be put in the service of successful communication. Thinking back to the distinctive characteristics of foreign language contexts described in Chapter Three, it seems that it is here that such activities are truly invaluable. This is because they have the potential to provide students with their sole opportunity to deploy the structures they are taught to understand and convey real messages, thus directing their attention to the interfaces between form, meaning and use. Additionally, communication tasks necessitating the application of specific constructions are indispensable for automatizing the scant implicit knowledge that foreign language learners may possess. Even more importantly, such activities may contribute to transforming explicit representations into implicit ones when learners are at the right interlanguage stage, the targeted form is developmentally unconstrained, or the aim is to assist students in gaining greater control of multi-word units containing the structure being taught. Even though the adherents of task-based learning such as Long and Crookes (1992), Willis (1996) or Skehan (1998) would in all likelihood look askance at such a prospect, structure-oriented tasks also appear to be prime candidates for the production phase of the PPP, which is instrumental in developing learners' ability to



communicate but is so often neglected by teachers (Pawlak in press). Moreover, as the present writer has proposed elsewhere (Pawlak 2004g), such activities are perfectly suited to conducting review work or going about remedial teaching (see section 4.2.1. below).

Once such a position is adopted, it ceases to be relevant whether or not learners manage to figure out the instructional agenda and, thus, whether the ensuing learning is exclusively incidental or implicit. No matter what some applied linguists might hope for, it is doubtful that there are many situations in which learners are oblivious to the linguistic focus of a task, perhaps with the exception of those representing a very low proficiency level or being totally engrossed in making meaning for one reason or another. In fact, when the topic around which a task is built is intriguing and its objectives are challenging enough, even telling students overtly what grammatical structure an activity aims to elicit does not necessarily diminish its communicative potential and, in some cases, might even contribute to considerably greater complexity and accuracy of the language used. It is perhaps less controversial that once students have completed an implicit structure-based task of one kind or another, they can be provided with explicit teacher-fronted instruction as well as production practice activities involving the grammar point(s) in focus. After all, as Fotos rightly points out with reference to the foreign language context, "In this case, task performance is seen as enhancing formal instruction, not replacing it" (2002: 143). Finally, all the controversies surrounding learners' awareness of targeted forms in performing focused communication tasks might be irrelevant in view of the fact that they are rarely taken advantage of in classroom practice, which is perhaps the corollary of their virtual absence from most popular coursebooks (cf. Ellis 2002c) as well as the time and effort required to appropriately design them. Given such a situation, it stands to reason that the energies of methodologists and materials writers should not be channeled into concealing instructional aims from learners, but, rather, ensuring that implicit structure-based tasks are readily available and teachers regularly draw upon them.

#### 4.1.1.2. Focus on a language feature

Although the benefits of focused communication tasks can hardly be overestimated, they do not form the mainstay of FFI in most educational settings, and, to all intents and purposes, they can still

be said to perform only a marginal role in a typical foreign language classroom. In fact, it is very likely that if teachers or learners were to give examples of activities they associate with teaching grammar, the vast majority would point to diverse *feature-focused options* which are intended to ensure the mastery of isolated linguistic features. At the same time, however, only very few practitioners are probably aware that the instructional techniques and procedures they employ in their lessons do not all serve the same purposes, and, as illustrated in Figure 4.1., while some of them mainly contribute to the development of explicit knowledge, others are primarily intended to foster the growth of implicit knowledge. In effect, it is possible to make an important distinction between feature-focused options that underpin explicit grammar teaching, and such that are indicative of implicit FFI.

#### 4.1.1.2.1. Choices in explicit form-focused instruction

As Ellis (1997: 84) comments, "In explicit grammar instruction the purpose is to teach about grammar so that learners construct some kind of conscious, cognitive representation which, if asked, they can articulate. This is likely to entail the learners learning some subtechnical vocabulary (e.g. 'refer to' and 'agree') and technical terms (e.g. 'article' and 'pronoun')". The utility of such teaching, sometimes referred to as *consciousness-raising* (e.g. Sharwood-Smith 1981; Rutherford 1987), as well as the value of explicit representation are typically called into question not only by the proponents of the *zero option* but also the adherents of the *focus on form approach*. However, according to the theory of instructed language learning presented in the preceding chapter, there are grounds to assume that, in contrast to implicit knowledge, explicit knowledge is not subject to processing constraints, its acquisition does not entail passage through developmental stages, and, therefore, it is amenable to intervention which can be implemented in a variety of ways. As shown in Figure 4.1., a crucial distinction can be made in this regard between *direct* and *indirect* microoptions, or, to use the terms commonly employed in handbooks for language teachers, *deductive* and *inductive* grammar teaching.

### *Deductive (direct) form-focused instruction*

In *deductive (direct) grammar instruction*, also known as *rule-driven learning* (Thornbury 2001b), learners are supplied with an oral or written rule explanation, usually at the beginning of a lesson, and are subsequently requested to apply, complete or amend this rule in some kind of task. For example, students could be given more or less specific generalizations concerning the use of the English present simple and progressive tenses, and then asked to work on a number practice activities in the form of fill-in-the-blank, completion or translation exercises, the successful performance of which would call for the application of the rule introduced. Even though such a general sequence constitutes a distinctive characteristic of deductive grammar teaching and is relatively fixed, the initial phase of direct rule presentation involves a number of specific elements which can be manipulated. Sharwood-Smith (1981), for example, argues that deductive grammar teaching can vary according to the degree of its *explicitness* (i.e. the teacher only drops a hint or presents a complete rule) and *elaboration* (i.e. the amount of time rule presentation takes up). Eisenstein (1980) additionally points to the *source of presentation* (i.e. the teacher, students, a textbook) and the *manner in which it is provided* (i.e. oral, written or a combination of both).

There also exist many other factors that have to be taken into consideration. In the first place, the teacher has to decide whether a verbal statement of the rule and its explanation are necessary since, in some cases, important relationships between, say, two components of a sentence or a particular form and its use can be made salient by means of *demonstration* (e.g. demonstrative pronouns can be introduced by pointing to objects in the classroom), *charts* (e.g. the information about the formation of affirmative, interrogative and negative sentences can be neatly summarized in tables), *formulas* (e.g. V + O + I or V + ing), *iconic devices* (e.g. a scale showing the degree of obligation and necessity conveyed by different modal verbs), or *pictures* (e.g. a picture depicting people resting on a beach can be used to introduce locative prepositions) (cf. Larsen-Freeman 2003). In many situations, however, teachers ultimately opt for an explicit verbal explanation at some point either to ensure that such techniques have enabled all students to grasp the generalization or

because they may be inadequate in the case of complex structures and opaque form-meaning-use relationships.

Here, again, teachers have several plausible courses of action at their disposal, the most important of which are related to the reliance on *learners' L1*, the *use of linguistic terminology* and *crosslingual comparisons*. As for falling back on the mother tongue, it seems to be warranted in teaching beginners or when the rule is inherently difficult and known to have posed learning problems in the past. Even in such cases, however, it is perhaps advisable to start with an explanation in the TL and only later resort to the shared L1. Similar considerations will have to be taken into account in deciding about the use of metalanguage and the degree of its sophistication, although, here, additional variables are learners' cognitive maturity, their familiarity with the relevant terminology, as well as their learning styles and preferences (cf. Borg 1999). Finally, the rule can be better understood and remembered if it is compared with its counterpart in the L1. Thus, for example, Polish learners of English would undoubtedly benefit from being sensitized to the fact that the use of the present perfect tense may sometimes be required in sentences where the present tense is used in Polish (e.g. 'I have known her for a long time').

In addition, the effectiveness and utility of a generalization is likely to be determined by the inherent characteristics of the rule as well as some kind of justification for why it operates. According to Swan, if it is assumed, however controversial this might be, that language rules are useful to learners and can positively affect the process of instructed language learning, "good rules must be more useful than bad rules" (1994: 45). In accordance with this belief, he proposes six requirements that a successful pedagogic rule should satisfy, namely:

- truth (i.e. it should reflect reasonably well linguistic facts);
- demarcation (i.e. it should clearly indicate the limits on the use of a structure);
- clarity (i.e. it should emphasize what is most important and eliminate ambiguity);
- simplicity (i.e. it should be made manageable by leaving out inessential details);
- conceptual parsimony (i.e. it should be appropriate to the conceptual framework available to the learner);

- relevance (i.e. it should address real and potential problems experienced by learners).

By Swan's (1994) own admission, some of the requirements overlap and others are bound to conflict with each other since, for example, it would perhaps be a futile effort to try to devise a rule about the use of English articles that would be at the same time clear, simple and true. On the other hand, they provide a useful point of reference not only for writers of pedagogic grammars intended for a clearly defined but still wide and diversified audience, but also for classroom teachers coming up with and adjusting their own rules of thumb in response to the demands of classroom discourse and the feedback they receive from their students. Somewhat paradoxically perhaps, it is often the latter that are more likely to meet the six criteria than those found in respectable reference grammars. As Swan comments, "Teachers often give students explanations of a kind that they would never dream of producing if an inspector was in the room. And yet the teacher's corner-cutting rules of thumb, half-truths and unscientific terminology might on occasion work better than anything that the inspector would be capable of" (1994: 54). Larsen-Freeman (2003) believes, however, that even the best pedagogic rules do not reflect the true nature of grammar and there are limits to their utility (e.g. abstractness, emphasis on form at the expense of meaning and use, exceptions). Thus, it is also necessary to provide learners with a convincing rationale for why rules exist. This entails acquainting them with both *how* a particular form is used and *why* it is used in this manner, as only in this way can L2 acquisition become more meaningful.

Arguably, when such guidelines are followed, deductive grammar teaching can indeed be regarded as a valuable pedagogical tool. In particular, direct explicit instruction can be time-saving, it provides the learner with a kind of mental map of the material, recognizes the intelligence, maturity and preferences of adolescent and adult students, allows a principled coverage of language points and ensures a more orderly organization of lessons (Johnson 2001; Thornbury 2001b). Although she cautions against equating the teaching of grammar with the teaching of rules, even Larsen-Freeman (2001a, 2003) acknowledges that there might be merit to giving explicit generalizations as one way of promoting *grammaring*. This is because simple, clear, precise and relevant pedagogic rules of

thumb may provide a sense of security, offer guidance on how the L2 is structured, bring about fresh insights, and, most importantly perhaps, this is what learners frequently request and perceive as useful.

On the other hand, however, numerous criticisms have been leveled at the deductive paradigm, not least of which being that it smacks of the practices of the Grammar Translation Method and it is an integral element of the PPP procedure, so much out of favor with communicatively oriented researchers (e.g. Long and Crookes 1992; Skehan 1998). According to Thornbury (2001b), starting a lesson with the introduction of a grammar point may be discouraging for younger or less proficient students, direct explanation may not be sufficiently memorable, and, if this type of instruction is employed on a regular basis, learners might walk away with the erroneous idea that L2 learning consists in consigning to memory a number of grammar rules. In addition, it has been suggested that deductive teaching is excessively teacher-centered in the sense that it encourages one-way transmission of knowledge, or, at best, a highly restricted and asymmetrical exchange of information based on the IRF sequence. It is such limitations that have prompted some researchers and methodologists to argue that "Educationally, the inductive sequence is probably to be preferred" (Stern 1992: 150), or that "In most contexts, an inductive approach is more appropriate (...)" (Brown 2001: 365).

### *Inductive (indirect) form-focused instruction*

In the case of *inductive (indirect) grammar instruction*, or *discovery learning* (Thornbury 2001b), learners are first exposed to instances of language use, they are expected to attend to a specific grammatical structure in the data, pinpoint recurrent patterns, and arrive at their own generalizations which account for the regularities perceived. For example, learners could be provided with a continuous English text containing numerous instances of comparative and superlative adjectives, instructed to underline all the adjectival forms they can identify, and, finally, requested to come up with a rule governing the formation and use of these forms. Despite the fact that the move from the specific to the general is a distinctive feature of induction and the sequence itself cannot be altered, similarly to deductive teaching, a number of variations are still feasible and they tend to be

profitably exploited in recently published coursebooks (cf. Nitta and Gardner 2005). Among other things, this is evident in:

- the type of input (e.g. unrelated sentences, surveys, dialogs, texts of different length, authentic exemplars generated by concordancing software, pictures or drawings);
- the mode in which the data are provided (i.e. written, spoken or both);
- the presence of devices aimed at enhancing the salience of the target structure (e.g. increased frequency, typographical alterations, intonational focus, etc.);
- the character of the operations learners are supposed to perform on the data (e.g. gap-filling, providing responses requiring the application of a particular feature, answering questions about its use, rule-completion, etc.);
- the degree of metalinguistic awareness involved (i.e. the extent to which the rule is couched in grammatical terminology, etc.).

Leaving such alternatives aside for a while, discovery learning is widely believed to be superior in many respects to the deductive paradigm where learners have rules handed to them on a silver platter. This is because uncovering the regularities underlying language use is more engaging and stimulating, the rules and patterns learners infer by themselves may be more meaningful, memorable and serviceable, the mental effort invested in the performance of such activities ensures deeper levels of processing, and the requirement that students draw upon their own linguistic and cognitive resources fosters learner autonomy (cf. Thornbury 2001b). Moreover, according to Brown (2001), the inductive approach is more in line with the natural processes of acquisition, it allows students to observe how the TL is used in communication and to identify form-meaning-function mappings before they become preoccupied with rules. Equally importantly, it builds in them intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivation.

Even though it would undoubtedly be possible to list many more advantages of indirect explicit grammar instruction, such benefits should not be taken for granted since the degree of ultimate success of discovery activities depends on the quantity and quality of the input data learners are expected to interact with, the kind of analysis they are requested to carry out as well as the nature of the task they are instructed to perform. In his study of the techniques

and procedures Polish teachers of English use in grammar teaching, the present author (Pawlak in press) found that, while 64% of the respondents reported regularly asking their students to discover rules for themselves, they tended to rely mostly on activities which involved looking for exemplars of a particular structure in a text or comparing pairs of sentences. Additionally, most of them appeared to largely ignore the elaborate inductive learning sequences available in some coursebooks, and the specific examples of discovery tasks they supplied indicate that their learners seldom had access to a sufficient amount of data, they were very infrequently requested to perform specific operations on such input, and they did not have ample time to make the required generalizations. It stands to reason that discovery learning which is so repetitive and superficial is unlikely to enhance involvement and motivation, or to trigger in-depth processing which is indispensable for the construction and retention of new knowledge.

Apart from the somewhat obvious recommendation that teachers should make greater use of the activities laboriously devised by materials writers, it could also be suggested that one plausible way of enhancing the potential of inductive grammar teaching is through the application of *corpora*. The value of such computerized databases of spoken and written language is unquestionable because they not only contain multiple instances of authentic uses of specific features, but also make the process of seeking out patterns and regularities more rapid and reliable. Thanks to the application of *concordancing programs*, for example, it is possible to organize the corpus data in such a way that a particular word or phrase is displayed together with its immediate linguistic environment and such *key word in context* (KWIC) information can be used as a basis for making generalizations about the rules underlying its use. While utilizing such resources to teach structures which are extensively described in pedagogical grammars is desirable, it is truly vital when the aim is to raise students' awareness of the elusive features of spoken grammar (Leech 2000), teach them how grammar functions at the level of discourse (Celce-Murcia 2002), or help them acquire lexicogrammatical items incorporating specific features (Aston 2001). Still, a word of caution is in order on pedagogical applications of corpora-based activities. Among other things, they are time-consuming, the availability of necessary software is still limited, many teachers are not even aware that such possibilities exist, and,



most importantly perhaps, even proficient students can easily be overwhelmed by the richness and complexity of the data bound to be present in a fully authentic corpus sample (cf. Podromou 1997). Given such difficulties, corpus-based resources can perhaps only be employed as an appealing once-in-a-while departure from the ordinary rather than form the cornerstone of indirect explicit FFI in most educational contexts.

There also exist many other equally interesting but more practicable alternatives that practitioners can exploit with the purpose of enhancing the quality of inductive grammar teaching. One such proposal comes from Turewicz (2004), who attempts to apply the principles of Langacker's (1991) Cognitive Grammar to teaching modal verbs to advanced learners of English. She argues that learners can be actively involved in inferring the processes of meaning construction and reports a workshop in which Portuguese students managed to discover the parameters responsible for the indeterminacy of the modal verb 'may' under the guidance of and in collaboration with the teacher. Although it derives from a very different conceptual framework, the approach recommended by Turewicz bears striking resemblance to *scaffolded interaction* which, according to the adherents of Sociocultural Theory, can result in the internalization of structures within the learners' zone of proximal development and, as such, can also be regarded as an extension of the inductive paradigm (see Chapter Three, section 3.3.6.). Drawing upon this perspective, Ohta (2000a) found that collaborative dialogue in role-play and translation activities accompanied by developmentally appropriate peer and teacher assistance resulted in the improvement in the use of Japanese desiderative construction, as measured by the extent of transition from interpsychological to intrapsychological functioning (cf. Aljaafreh and Lantolf 1994).

The significant role of interaction and collaboration between students in arriving at generalizations about language use on the basis of the data provided is also a hallmark of what is known as *grammar consciousness-raising (C-R) tasks* or *explicit structure-based tasks*, a type of a communicative discovery activity that was described and explored in a series of papers by Ellis and Fotos (e.g. Fotos

Consciousness-raising task

1. Here is some information about when three people joined the company they now work for and how long they have been working there:

Name	Date joined	Length of time
Ms. Regan	1945	45 years
Mr. Bush	1970	20 years
Ms. Thatcher	1989	9 months
Mr. Baker	1990 (Feb)	10 days

2. Study these sentences about these people. When is 'for' used and when is 'since' used?
- Ms. Regan has been working for her company *for* most of her life.
  - Mr. Bush has been working for his company *since* 1970.
  - Ms. Thatcher has been working for her company *for* 9 months.
  - Mr. Baker has been working for his company *since* February.
3. Which of the following sentences are ungrammatical? Why?
- Ms. Regan has been working for her company *for* 1945.
  - Mr. Bush has been working for his company *for* 20 years.
  - Ms. Thatcher has been working for her company *since* 1989.
  - Mr. Baker has been working for his company *since* 10 days.
4. Try and make up a rule to explain when 'for' and 'since' are used.
5. Make up one sentence about when you started to learn English and one sentence about how long you have been studying English. Use 'for' and 'since'.
- 

*Figure 4.2. An example of a consciousness-raising task (adapted from Ellis 2002d: 173).*

and Ellis 1991; Fotos 1993, 1994; Ellis 2002d).<sup>1</sup> As Fotos (2002: 145) explains, "Although it [the task] is communicative, the task

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<sup>1</sup> As is the case with many other aspects of FFI discussed in the present work, there is considerable terminological confusion concerning the term *consciousness-raising*. As pointed out at the beginning of this section, it can be used to refer to any kind of explicit grammar instruction, irrespective of whether it is direct or indirect. This is the approach adopted by Rutherford (1987) Sharwood-Smith (1993) as well as Ellis in some of his recent publications (e.g. Ellis 1997, 2002c). However, in many other sources (e.g. Ellis 1998, Fotos 2002) the term is reserved for inductive grammar teaching in which learners collaboratively solve grammar problems and this is what it is taken to mean here.

content involves developing rules for use of a grammar form. The learners are required to solve grammar problems through meaning-focused interaction about the grammar structure, which is the task content". While there is obviously scope for variation, according to Ellis (1991: 234, 2003: 163), all such activities share a number of key characteristics which include:

- preselecting and isolating a specific linguistic feature for focused attention;
- providing learners with data illustrating the use of this feature and, in some cases, also an explicit rule describing and explaining its form or use;
- encouraging learners to invest intellectual effort in understanding the target structure;
- optionally instructing learners to verbalize a rule underlying the use of the form.

One example of such a problem-solving explicit structure-based task is presented in Figure 4.2. (Ellis 2002d). It serves the purpose of raising learners' awareness about the grammatical differences between temporal adverbs 'for' and 'since' which are typically used with present perfect tenses. In this case, the task is intended to address features which are known to be a source of considerable difficulty, the input data contain both grammatical and ungrammatical sentences to facilitate rule discovery, and the requirement for the production of the targeted forms is minimum. It is also possible to construct C-R tasks in which a greater emphasis is laid on producing specific features meaningfully in order to solve the grammar problem posed. Fotos (1995, 2002), for example, describes an information-gap activity which requires learners to work in pairs, ask their partners questions necessitating the use of the English present and future conditional sentences such as 'If I study hard, I will pass the test' or 'If I won the lottery, I would travel around the world', and write down the responses they receive.

Apart from the amount of spoken or written production requiring the use of the targeted feature, explicit structure-oriented tasks can also differ with regard to a range of *data options* as well as the *types of operations* that learners are requested to perform (Ellis 1997: 161-162). As to the data options, the instances of language use on the basis of which students are supposed to come up with generalizations can vary according to whether they are:

- authentic or contrived (i.e. prepared for native speakers or language teaching);
- oral or written (i.e. representing written or spoken language);
- well-formed or deviant (i.e. complying with the TL norm or containing errors);
- gap or non-gap (i.e. information must be shared or learners have access to all the data);
- embedded in discrete sentences or continuous text (i.e. the past simple can be exemplified by means of unrelated utterances or a story).

As regards the types of operations, the language data can be manipulated through:

- identification (e.g. underlining the target form);
- judgment (e.g. deciding whether the data are correct or appropriate);
- completion (e.g. filling in blanks in a passage with instances of a particular structure);
- modification (e.g. reordering or rewriting part of a text);
- sorting (e.g. assigning the forms present in the data to different categories);
- matching (e.g. combining two sets of data according to some stated principle);
- rule provision (e.g. arriving at a verbal or non-verbal generalization).

In addition to the two main categories, there are also other choices available such as the *participation pattern* in which the task is solved (i.e. group work or lockstep), the *language* in which it is to be performed (i.e. the L1 or the TL) as well as the *directness of the instructional focus* (i.e. a game or a straightforward exercise). When the diverse alternatives are combined, it becomes possible to design a wide range of extremely varied learning activities, with the caveat that, in each case, a consciousness-raising task "constitutes a kind of puzzle which when solved enables learners to discover for themselves how a linguistic feature works" (Ellis 2003: 163). Obviously, such activities would probably turn out to be ineffective if they were to be used in isolation or serve as a sole basis for teaching grammar and, thus, it is necessary to skillfully incorporate them into a language lesson. Here, again, at least two viable courses of action can be envisaged, with C-R tasks being employed at the

beginning of the class and followed by formal explanations or communicative activities, or, alternatively, being postponed till learners have been provided with some kind of instruction (Fotos 2002).

Although there can be little doubt that the utilization of consciousness-raising tasks might boost the potential of inductive FFI and make grammar-oriented lessons more engaging, the obvious question to pose is whether they are effective in helping learners gain greater control of the structures taught. Representing an option in explicit instruction, C-R tasks primarily aim to trigger noticing and cognitive comparison as well as to build an explicit representation of the targeted feature, thus paving the way for its integration at a later time rather than instantaneous acquisition. Since the preparation of successful activities of this kind is bound to place heavy demands on teachers and their completion inevitably takes up a lot of valuable classroom time, it is clearly insufficient to hypothesize that they will have a beneficial effect in the long run and it is necessary to provide some tangible proof that they actually work, a line of enquiry that has been pursued by a number of researchers.

Fotos and Ellis (1991), for example, investigated the effect of explicit structure-based tasks on Japanese learners' ability to understand the rule for dative alteration in English and found that they were as effective as a standard grammar lesson in improving the subjects' understanding of the target structure, but the gains generated by the traditional instruction were more permanent. In a follow-up study, however, Fotos employed C-R activities to raise the subjects' consciousness of three different grammatical structures (i.e. adverb placement, indirect object placement and relative clause usage) and reported that "(...) the gains achieved through task performance were found to be durable even after 2 weeks had passed" (1994: 343). Such findings have been corroborated in other research projects, although the results of some of them seem to indicate that the value of consciousness-raising tasks hinges upon the degree of awareness of the targeted forms and the depth of conceptually-driven processing (Leow 1997), their effectiveness may be a function of learners' proficiency level, and students do not view them as superior to other types of explicit instruction (Mohamed 2004). It should also be noted that when learners actually use the TL to solve grammar problems, C-R tasks lead to exchanges abounding

in output modifications, which may contribute more directly to the growth of implicit knowledge (e.g. Fotos 1994, 1997), a point that will be revisited in section 4.1.1.2.2. below.

While the benefits of explicit structure-based tasks are undeniable, so much so that they have even been recommended as a substitute for teacher-fronted formal grammar lessons (Fotos 2002), they are not foolproof pedagogic tools and suffer from a number of limitations. For one thing, as insightfully pointed out by Fotos and Ellis, "Some learners may not wish to talk about grammar. They may find it a boring topic, or they may find it difficult to discuss because they lack the basic metalinguistic knowledge needed to do so" (1991: 623). Such activities may also be unsuitable for young learners and the odds are that, no matter how high their proficiency level might be, students in monolingual classrooms will be tempted to resort to their L1 to solve the task more quickly and effortlessly (Sheen 1992; Ellis 2003). What should also be taken into account are individual learner differences which militate against an uncritical acceptance of C-R tasks as a teaching procedure that is equally advantageous for everyone. This commonsense assumption seems to be supported empirically since, as Reber, Walkenfeld and Hernstadt (1991) found, the ability to successfully engage in explicit learning tasks may be a function of general intelligence, a relationship that does not hold for implicit learning. Given such considerations, it is self-evident that C-R activities alone are insufficient when it comes to grammar teaching and should be used in conjunction with other task types.

Many of the principles underpinning explicit structure-based tasks are also evident in activities which encourage learners to use language communicatively to consciously reflect on their own and their interlocutors' TL production, thus realizing the *metalinguistic function* of output (cf. Swain 1995, 1998). *Metatalk* of this kind, also known as *collaborative dialogue* (Swain 2000), by no means has to involve the application of metalinguistic terminology and, happening as it does in the context of meaning-focused communication, it "may well serve the function of deepening the students' awareness of forms and rules, and the relationship of the forms and rules to the meaning they are trying to express (...)" (Swain 1998: 69). As such, it may encourage hypothesis formation and testing, stimulate the microprocesses of noticing and internal comparison, and, ultimately, trigger the macroprocesses of analysis and restructuring, although, again, such tasks mainly contribute to the development of

explicit knowledge and their beneficial effects will be delayed rather than immediate. Obviously, designing activities which meet the essential requirements of a task as envisaged by Skehan (1998) or Ellis (2003) and simultaneously elevate TL forms to the status of the main topic of communication poses a formidable challenge. This is because learners may become so engrossed in making meaning that they will deliberately shun an explicit focus on grammar or, what is perhaps a more likely prospect, problems involving TL structures will capture their attention to such an extent that the key requirement for the primacy of meaningful interaction will not be satisfied.

One task that is believed to meet the stringent criteria is a *dictogloss*, in which learners reflect on their use of the target language in the process of reconstructing a short continuous text that is selected or contrived to contain many instances of a specific grammatical feature in a meaningful context (Wajnryb 1990). The procedure comprises the following three stages:

- 1) students listen to a text which the teacher usually reads twice at normal speed and are instructed to jot down familiar words or phrases, such as key content words or temporal reference devices;
- 2) they are requested to work in pairs or small groups and attempt to collaboratively reconstruct the text from their shared resources, with the important caveat that the aim is not to produce an exact replica of the original but, rather, to include in their versions all the relevant information it contains;
- 3) the outcomes that have been generated during student-student collaboration and interaction are presented to the whole class, analyzed and compared.

According to Wajnryb, the value of the dictogloss lies in the fact that it "allows learners to try out the language, that is, to try out their hypotheses and subsequently receive more data about language (...) Through active learner involvement, students come to confront their own strengths and weaknesses (...) In doing so, they find out what they need to know" (1990: 10).

The effectiveness of the dictogloss procedure has been explored in a number of studies. Such investigations typically involve tape-recording students' collaborative work, transcribing their interactions and analyzing the transcripts in terms of *language related episodes* (LREs), defined as "any part of a dialogue in which

students talk about the language they are producing, question their language use, or other- or self-correct" (Swain 1998: 70). Once identified, such stretches of discourse are subjected to quantitative and/or qualitative analysis which involves, among other things, assigning them to different categories (e.g. reflecting a principal focus on grammar, vocabulary, etc.) and determining the percentage of correct solutions to the problems tackled. One study that utilized such analytical procedures was conducted by Kowal and Swain (1994, 1997), who found that dictogloss-based tasks were indeed effective in getting immersion students to notice and produce present tense forms as well as to engage in metatalk involving the structure. These encouraging results have been corroborated by LaPierre (1994), who demonstrated that learners tended to remember correct solutions attained in the long term, and Lapkin, Swain and Smith (2002), who showed that the opportunities for reformulation aided immersion learners in progressing in their correct use of French pronominal verbs.

In this connection, it is also worth mentioning a study carried out by the present author (Pawlak 2003b) which is perhaps the only attempt to date to explore the value of metatalk in the Polish educational context. He used dictogloss tasks with the purpose of raising secondary school students' awareness of English tenses (i.e. present perfect and past simple) and conditionals (i.e. unreal past), and found that not only did the subjects produce numerous LREs involving the structures but also successfully resolved most of the problems encountered. These positive findings led him to conclude that "tasks of this kind can be employed to provide students with meaningful practice in the use of structures which they find problematic and presumably facilitate the process of their acquisition", as well as to suggest that "there is no reason why the texts students (...) reconstruct should not concentrate on some aspects of lexis, functional language or even pronunciation" (2003b: 377).

The principle of stimulating metatalk also underpins *text-reconstruction tasks* which aim to engage students in meaning-focused interaction centering upon points of grammar, but, in contrast to the dictogloss, rely on written input data. One study that examined the value of text-reconstruction in directing learners' attention to linguistic features and eliciting attempts to use them was conducted by Storch (1998). In lieu of targeting specific structures, however,



she sought to determine which TL forms caused the learners the most concern and to pinpoint the ways in which they went about resolving the problems encountered. The analysis showed that the subjects most often experienced difficulty using tenses, prepositions and articles, and they mainly appealed to grammatical rules, intuition and meaning when arriving at solutions. Izumi and Bigelow (2000), in turn, examined the relationship between collaborative problem-solving during text-reconstruction and the occurrence and production accuracy of English conditionals. They found that the treatment was effective in raising the learners' awareness of the targeted form, getting them to produce it, and doing so in a more targetlike manner.

Effective as they are in promoting the noticing of language forms and contributing to the growth of explicit knowledge, both the dictogloss and text-reconstruction tasks are plagued by problems similar to those affecting C-R activities. For one thing, successful tasks of this kind are difficult to design and the necessity of preparing activities geared to learners' proficiency level and focusing on the diverse structures covered is bound to deter teachers from seriously contemplating classroom applications. Besides, if the performance of such tasks is expected to prove beneficial, learners should have adequate time to complete them and, better yet, be provided with appropriate modeling of metatalk as well as an extended feedback session. Although, with time and practice, students would in all likelihood get used to the procedure and become adept at discussing and defending grammatical choices, this would surely require a lot of classroom time which is a scarce commodity in many contexts. Equally importantly, some students might be averse to communicating about grammar, conscious reflection about TL forms may be more appropriate for mature and proficient students, and extensive reliance on the L1 is a problem to be seriously reckoned with in monolingual classes. Such difficulties are acknowledged by the present writer (Pawlak 2003b), who additionally points to the poor quality of interlanguage talk in dictogloss tasks, conflicting interpretations of their goals, and learners' inability to verify the correctness of their solutions when LREs are produced.

*Comparing the value of deductive and inductive instruction*

All things considered, there are grounds to assume that Stern's (1992) and Brown's (2001) pronouncements concerning the superiority of inductive grammar teaching are premature and unfounded because, despite its undeniable benefits, the approach is not without its share of problems. In the first place, if discovery learning is to have more than a negligible effect on L2 development, learners have to be provided with sufficient time to examine and manipulate the input data, particularly when corpus-based resources, C-R activities or text-reconstruction tasks are used, which inevitably diminishes the amount of time available for developing other language skills and subsystems (cf. Thornbury 2001b). In addition, the precious time invested in allowing students to arrive at their own generalizations may be wasted if the wrong rule is hypothesized and, in the end, the teacher has to resort to direct explanations anyway. Besides, in monolingual classrooms such problems are likely to be further exacerbated by the fact that the L1 is bound to be drawn upon by less and more proficient students alike as they search for regularities in the data. All of this shows that although inductive activities may be a welcome diversion from the mundane reality of teacher-fronted, grammar-based lessons, they are unlikely to be utilized on a regular basis in foreign language teaching, where the rule-driven approach may be at least as effective and perhaps much more feasible in a range of situations.

An assumption that the inductive paradigm should be predominant in teaching grammar is also untenable because there are students with very different learning styles, goals and preferences, and not all of them are equally eager to search for rules or discuss the erroneous output of their peers. Some of them, for example, could in fact find direct explanations and rule statements more engaging and memorable, viewing them as vital signposts which help them disentangle the intricacies of TL grammar. It is also possible to find learners who are much more adept than their peers at making sense of generalizations or disambiguating even the most complex linguistic puzzles. Being eager to apply in practice what they have learnt, such students might see no point in getting engaged in lengthy inductive tasks and perceive them as an unnecessary waste of time that could be dedicated to deploying the

structures in communicative activities. Although research into *learner instruction matching* (Ellis 1994) is still in its infancy, much of it is dated, and its findings are inconclusive, it also indicates that indirect FFI is not equally advantageous for all learners. In fact, there is some evidence to suggest that the effectiveness of deductive and inductive teaching may be a function of such variables as L2 learning experience (Nation and McLaughlin 1986), language aptitude (Wesche 1981), intelligence (Reber, Walkenfeld and Hernstadt 1991), or the degree of field dependence and independence (Abraham 1985).

Taking a somewhat different angle, indirect grammar instruction inevitably places heavy demands on teachers who may deliberately shun discovery activities to avoid the extra duties involved in lesson preparation and planning. Obviously, an argument could be advanced that this is a rather feeble excuse for eschewing inductive tasks since, as Nitta and Gardner (2005) found in their analysis of ELT textbooks, the writers of recently published teaching materials attach great importance to inductive presentation and go to great lengths to provide students with a rich and varied diet of discovery learning experiences. However, much may depend on the choice of coursebooks subjected to empirical scrutiny or the methodological allegiances of publishers, as evidenced by the fact that reviews of teaching materials sometimes produce rather conflicting results. That such a cautionary note is fully warranted can be seen from a study conducted by Ellis, who explored the instructional options incorporated into grammar practice books and concluded that: "It is clear that two features are predominant: explicit description supplied and controlled production" (2002c: 160).<sup>2</sup> Also, considering the fact that many teachers shy away from drawing upon discovery activities

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<sup>2</sup> One possible reason for the disparity between the findings reported by Ellis (2002c) and Nitta and Gardner (2005) could be that they included very different teaching materials in their analyses. It is perhaps hardly surprising that textbooks focusing exclusively on grammatical structures provide their users with rule descriptions and explanations that can be subsequently applied in a wide range of practice activities. By contrast, in the case of coursebooks designed for use in the classroom, a particular grammar point is just one among many objectives to be attained in a particular theme-based unit and, thus, it is possible to seed different texts, exercises and activities with multiple exemplars thereof, which enhances its salience and fosters noticing.

even when they are given the pride of place in the coursebooks they work with (Pawlak in press), the crux of the problem may not lie in ensuring greater availability, but, rather, shaping practitioners' beliefs and preferences, a task that is extremely difficult to accomplish (cf. Richards and Lockhart 1994).

Last but not least, the widely held belief in the superiority of discovery learning does not find support in the results of research which was specifically designed to compare the relative effectiveness of indirect and direct FFI. Although some studies failed to uncover significant differences in this regard (e.g. Abraham 1985; Shaffer 1989; Rosa and O'Neill 1999), only one found an advantage for inductive instruction (Herron and Tomasello 1992), and quite a few provided evidence for the beneficial effect of direct explicit FFI. One study which found an advantage for the deductive approach was carried out by Seliger (1987), where induction was operationalized as the provision of a rule statement at the end of the class. More recently, Robinson (1996) conducted a laboratory experiment in which he explored the effect of different learning conditions (incidental, implicit, rule-search and rule presentation) on the acquisition of easy and complex rules. He found that not only was explicit rule formulation more effective than implicit learning conditions on both types of rules but also that it was considerably more beneficial than consciously searching for patterns in the input data. Similar outcomes come from other recent laboratory studies such as those by N. Ellis (1993) and DeKeyser (1995). An advantage for the deductive approach in comparison with inductive teaching operationalized as immediate practice with scant metalinguistic information has also been reported by Erlam (2003b) who investigated the acquisition of direct object pronouns in L2 French. Also investigations into the value of metatalk indicate that students are more likely to talk about the target forms and reach more accurate solutions when direct explanations are provided prior to the performance of text-reconstruction (e.g. Lapkin, Swain and Smith 2002).

Although Robinson (1996) did not detect a relationship between the degree of structural complexity and the effectiveness of rule presentation and rule discovery, it is reasonable to assume that not all linguistic features are equally amenable to induction. Erlam (2003b: 256), for instance, hypothesizes that "this type of instruction is more likely to facilitate the learning of morphological rather than

syntactical aspects of language", whereas Ellis (2006: 98) suggests that "Simple rules may best be taught deductively, while more complex rules may best taught inductively", a position that is contested by Larsen-Freeman (2001a: 264) who argues that "(...) when a particular linguistic rule is rather convoluted, it may make more sense to present a grammar structure deductively". Such conflicting views as well as the impact of all the other variables discussed in this section seem to indicate that it is prudent to eschew definitive claims and adopt a differentiated approach to the teaching of explicit grammatical knowledge. This is because it is quite obvious that in some circumstances the inductive approach is desirable whereas in others logic may dictate that rule statements and explicit explanations should be provided at the beginning of the lesson (cf. Larsen-Freeman 2001a; Ellis 2006). As the present author (Pawlak 2004g: 279) has argued elsewhere:

(...) there is a need to strike a balance between direct and indirect ways of developing learners' explicit knowledge, as both of them can prove effective depending on the language form targeted, learner characteristics, or such practical considerations as the intensity of instruction and the time available for lesson preparation. It is perhaps safe to say, as is the case with other pedagogic options, that variety is at a premium where the value of particular choices cannot be unequivocally determined.

#### 4.1.1.2.2. Choices in implicit form-focused instruction

In contrast to the microoptions directed at the development of explicit knowledge of grammar, implicit teaching techniques encourage a global and intuitive approach to the target language, thus attaching little importance to conscious reflection and problem-solving. As Ellis (1997: 84) explains, "In implicit grammar instruction, the learners are asked to engage in practice of some kind. In this case, the aim is that the learners should learn the target structure to the extent that they can use it not just when they are consciously attending to it but also when they are engaged in meaning-focused communication". In other words, the employment of the various microoptions falling into this category is intended to contribute to the development of implicit, procedural knowledge that can be easily accessed in real-time processing and, thus, drawn upon during fluent performance. As depicted in Figure 4.1. above, implicit FFI can be

implemented by means of *output-oriented* and *input-oriented* techniques and procedures.

### *Output-oriented microoptions*

Even a cursory look at popular methodology textbooks (e.g. Ur 1996; Hedge 2000) or commonly used grammar practice books (e.g. Ur 1988; Murphy 1998) indicates that implicit FFI is typically associated with providing learners with opportunities to produce the targeted feature, thus drawing upon one or a combination of several *output-oriented microoptions*. Moreover, the main aim of the vast majority of production-based grammar practice activities is to ensure *error avoidance*, which means that they are designed in such a way that students are required to produce grammatically correct sentences and the likelihood of inaccurate application of a specific form is minimized. Taking into account the weight they are given in teaching materials as well as the fact that they naturally complement explicit rule presentation and, therefore, constitute an integral component of the still ubiquitous PPP procedure (see section 4.2.2. below), it should come as no surprise that such instructional options remain at the core of language pedagogy and practitioners keep expressing a strong preference for them (Pawlak in press).

In view of such widespread popularity, it is quite understandable that many production-based microoptions have been devised over the years and diverse classifications thereof have been proposed. One influential distinction traditionally made in the methodology literature is that between *drills* and *exercises*, where the former are designed in such a way that only a single correct answer exists and the latter tend to be more open-ended and allow several acceptable responses (cf. Stern 1992; Stevick 1996; Ellis 1997). Of course, a number of finer-grained subdivisions are possible, as exemplified by Paulston and Bruder's (1975) classification of language drills into:

- *mechanical* (i.e. such that only focus on language form and can be performed without paying attention to the meanings expressed, as in the transformation from 'John gets up early' to 'John got up early yesterday');
- *meaningful* (i.e. such that require the processing of meaning but not the conveyance of previously unknown information,

as in the exchange 'Is the boy playing football?' 'No, he is playing basketball');

- *communicative* (i.e. such that involve communicating actual content unknown to the hearer, as in 'What do you like doing in your free time?' 'I like watching television').

Although divisions of this kind are useful and enable methodologists to impose order on the great multitude of techniques that teachers have at their disposal, their main limitation is that the various categories are not polar opposites and the boundaries between them are often blurred. Thus, it appears reasonable to propose that the diverse output-oriented microoptions stressing error-free production should best be viewed on a continuum ranging from highly controlled *text-manipulation activities* to much freer *text-creation tasks* (Ellis 1997). In the former, learners are supplied with a set of sentences they are required to produce, and asked to manipulate them in a limited way by, for example, filling in blanks, substituting one element for another, choosing an item that best completes them, transforming them into a different pattern or translating the part containing the targeted form(s). As for the latter, they enable students to generate their own sentences using a specific grammatical feature, as is the case when they are instructed to find differences between two pictures depicting a scene in a park and explicitly advised to rely on the present progressive for that purpose. This example clearly demonstrates that at the text-creation end of the continuum it is possible to find activities which are akin in many respects to *production-based focused communication tasks*, the only difference being that students are fully aware that the primary aim is to practice a particular structure rather than engage in meaningful communication. As regards the activities sharing the features of text-manipulation and text-creation, such as *meaningful drills* or *guided meaningful practice* (Ur 1996), they can be placed somewhere in between the two extremes and their exact nature is likely to be a function of a number of variables related to the amount of control, the teacher's concern with accuracy, the type of linguistic data utilized, and many others. It should also be emphasized that the selection of different alternatives falling along the continuum is not haphazard. Rather, as Ellis writes, "A well-established methodological principle in current grammar teaching is to begin with text-manipulation and then move to text-creation activities. In this way

teachers hope to push the learners from controlled to automatic use of the target structure" (1998: 50).

Generally speaking, most SLA theorists and researchers are rather doubtful about the value of techniques involving production practice in directly contributing to IL development. They voice serious reservations about the assumption that a carefully-orchestrated, gradual progression from activities involving text-manipulation to those based on text-creation can lead learners from explicit to implicit rule knowledge, thus calling into question the central tenet of the strong-interface position (see Chapter Three, section 3.3.). In the first place, many output-oriented options, particularly those requiring operations on isolated sentences, are associated with the mechanical drills intended to assist decontextualized rote-learning which were commonly employed in audiolingual classrooms. Even more damaging to the envisaged utility of production practice are the findings of interlanguage studies demonstrating that the acquisition of many structures entails learners passing through a series of transitional stages before targetlike use is possible (see Chapter Two, section 2.2.). For example, it is hard to see how even the most intensive and prolonged practice of English interrogatives and negatives, as realized in a particular tense, can aid students in moving from the knowledge of rules to their fluent and accurate application in unplanned discourse. In addition, language learning does not consist in accumulating entities (Rutherford 1987) and, even when learners seem to have mastered a feature as a result of the application of numerous more or less controlled practice activities, there is a possibility of backsliding as new structures are introduced. In a similar vein, when the targeted form is far beyond the students' current stage of development, *item learning* rather than *system learning* is likely to occur, as is the case with the occurrence of *U-shaped behavior*. It is also possible to invoke the Teachability Hypothesis (Pienemann 1985), together with all the empirical evidence in its support, as well as research findings indicating that intervention directed at structures learners are not ready to acquire can even be deleterious and lead to the misrepresentation of the rule (e.g. Eubank 1987). Finally, there are research projects, such as those conducted by Ellis (1988) or Tuz (1993), which failed to find much evidence for the beneficial effect of output-oriented instruction on acquisition.



Even though such reservations should be heeded, it would be premature and imprudent to advocate an outright rejection of instructional options based on production practice. On the contrary, there is an urgent need to suggest the ways in which activities of this kind could be used more profitably. The main reason for adopting such a stance is purely pragmatic and is reflective of the fact that output-oriented techniques and procedures not only remain among those employed most frequently in foreign language contexts, but they continue to occupy a prominent place in ELT coursebooks and other instructional materials as well (cf. Ellis 2002c; Nitta and Gardner 2005). This is not to say, of course, that practitioners should slavishly adhere to the well-established but sometimes inefficacious ways of teaching grammar and shy away from incorporating implicit structure-based tasks or consciousness-raising activities into their lessons, but, rather, that it is "the practical necessities of classroom teaching, [such as learners' expectations], which sometimes prevent teachers from following the demands of theorists" (Hopkins and Nettle 1994: 158).

Apart from practical considerations of this kind, there are also important theoretical and empirical arguments for making output-oriented activities an integral element of FFI. For one thing, Schmidt (1994) makes the point that successful acquisition involves both a *skill aspect* and a *knowledge aspect*. Therefore, it could be argued that "although production practice may not enable learners to integrate entirely new grammatical structures into their interlanguages, it may help them use partially acquired structures more fluently and more accurately" (Ellis 1998: 51), a position that has found some empirical support (e.g. DeKeyser and Sokalski 1996, 2001). In other words, taking as a point of reference the theory of instructed language learning discussed in section 3.4. of Chapter Three, the application of text-manipulation activities can contribute to the automatization of the existing explicit representation whereas intensive use of text-creation tasks is likely to aid learners in gaining greater control of the features that form part of their implicit knowledge but cannot yet be accessed with ease. Production-based activities can also lead to the assimilation of variational features as well as those developmental ones that learners are ready to acquire.

Clearly, the presence of such positive effects is likely to be a function of the type of activities that teachers choose to employ in a particular lesson, an issue that was empirically investigated by

Castagnaro (1991). He found that the EFL students who had the opportunity to engage in free production and interaction with their peers did best in a posttest measuring their ability to produce complex noun phrases, which could be interpreted as testifying to the greater efficacy of text-creation. Although the outcomes of such experiments are likely to hinge on the inherent characteristics of the form itself, learners' developmental readiness or the extent to which the structure is integrated into their implicit representation, it is hard to deny the value of text-creation tasks. This is because, even when the PPP model is employed, learners should ultimately have the opportunity to use the target feature more freely as only in this way can they convert declarative into procedural knowledge or, more modestly, improve access to partly acquired structures.

While the potential benefits mentioned above are easily traced back to Skill-Learning Theory (DeKeyser 1998, 2001), support for output-based microoptions can also be found in Interaction-Based Theories and connectionist approaches (see Chapter Three, sections 3.3.6. and 3.3.7., respectively). As to the former, they place a premium on activities located at the more communicative end of the text-manipulation/text-creation continuum and implicit structure-based tasks, thus equating the term *practice* with opportunities for meaningful language use. This is evident both in Long's (1996) Interaction Hypothesis and Swain's (1985, 1995, 1998) Output Hypothesis, according to which negotiated interaction enables learners to attend to form-function mappings, it is the source of negative evidence and a catalyst for modified output, and Sociocultural Theory, which posits that social interaction in the ZPD provides learners with scaffolding necessary to produce new grammar structures (Lantolf 2000b, 2006). Once such perspectives are acknowledged, not only focused communication tasks, but also C-R and text-reconstruction activities can be credited with contributions to implicit knowledge. It is significant in this connection that such tasks have been found to lead to extensive negotiation comparable in terms of its quantity and quality to that generated in *unfocused communication tasks* (Fotos and Ellis 1991; Fotos 1994; Swain and Lapkin 2001). In addition, the positive effects of communicative production practice and the negotiated interaction it triggers have recently been reported in studies conducted by Ko, Schallert and Walters (2003), and Foster and Ohta (2005), both of which combine the cognitive and sociocultural positions. As regards connectionist

approaches, they can account for the assimilation of lexicogram-matical units serving as a basis for much of everyday communication (Skehan 1998; Wray 2002). Since the acquisition of such chunks is not developmentally constrained, they can be automatized by dint of practice and become integrated into implicit representation. As Myles, Hooper and Mitchell (1998, 1999) found, learners are adept at employing complex, rote-learned formulaic material to enhance the communicative effectiveness of their speech. Although evidence that such utterances may be broken down for analysis and trigger system learning is scant, their value in confidence-building and making learners successful language users cannot be denied.

Although methodological microoptions intended to help learners avoid making errors constitute the prime manifestation of output-oriented FFI, there also exists the possibility of designing production-based activities based on the assumption that the acquisition of grammar can be assisted by means of *error-inducing*. The rationale behind this approach derives from the conviction that learners' well-attested predilection for making useful generalizations and applying rules across a range of similar contexts can be exploited by teachers in anticipating common learning problems and designing activities which help students attain higher levels of accuracy (cf. Doughty and Williams 1998c). For example, learners could be supplied with pictures of their favourite celebrities, requested to compare their physique or personal qualities, and provided in advance with a set of carefully ordered adjectives that could be used for that purpose. The point is that if several short adjectives such as 'tall', 'cute', 'sexy', 'witty', 'slim' or 'rude' were followed by an adjective consisting of a few syllables such as 'beautiful', the ordering would in all likelihood lead students to overgeneralize the rule and produce incorrect forms such as 'beautifuller' or 'the beautifullest', in which case the errors would be explicitly pointed out. In fact, a similar procedure, typically referred to as the *garden path technique* (Herron and Tomasello 1992), could be employed in drawing learners' attention to a range of other structures where logical errors are made due to the process of generalization. The obvious candidates could be regular and irregular past tense forms, possessive adjectives and pronouns, or inaccuracies resulting from L1 interference like the notorious 'I have sixteen years' or 'I know him for three years', so often produced by Polish EFL learners.

Empirical support for the error-inducing option comes from the studies carried out by Tomasello and Herron (1988, 1989) which involved two groups of college-level learners of FL French receiving traditional error-avoiding instruction for one semester, and being induced into making errors, or, in the terminology used by the researchers, *led down the garden path*, in the following semester.<sup>3</sup> The *garden-path condition* proved to be effective in helping the subjects remember the exceptions and its effects were durable, which led Tomasello and Herron to hypothesize that FFI is most efficacious when learners are encouraged to generate a hypothesis and supplied with immediate feedback on its correctness. Promising as this finding undoubtedly is, it would be premature to advance far-reaching pedagogical proposals basing on just two studies which, incidentally, are suspect on methodological and theoretical grounds (Beck and Eubank 1991; Long 1996), and partial replications of which have failed to show an advantage for the garden-path technique (Ellis, Rozell and Takashima 1994). There are also practical reasons for exercising caution about pinning excessive hopes on the applications of error-inducing and putting it on a par with more commonly used FFI techniques and procedures. In fact, irrespective of the support the approach may glean from future research endeavours, it is likely to play only a marginal role in the classroom and, at best, constitute but one brief element in some instructional sequences. This is because many complex features (e.g. the tense system, modal verbs of probability) may not be amenable to FFI of this kind, it does not offer any expedient solution as to how the leap from controlled to unplanned L2 use can be accomplished, and it would not ensure a systematic coverage of TL grammar.

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<sup>3</sup> As can be seen from the example, the garden-path technique involves an element of discovery learning and, thus, could also be regarded as an inductive technique of teaching grammar with the purpose of developing explicit knowledge. However, following Ellis (1997), a decision has been made to classify error-inducing of this kind as an output-oriented option in implicit FFI on the grounds that students do engage in more or less controlled production of the target structure before they have their attention directed at an erroneous generalization.

### *Input-oriented microoptions*

*Input-oriented options*, also known as *structured input techniques* or *comprehension-based instruction*, are implemented by means of tasks "that do not require learners to engage in production but instead focus their attention on specific structures and help them to understand the meaning(s) which these structures realize – to induce them to undertake a kind of form-function analysis of the structure, as this is exemplified in input that has been specially contrived to illustrate it" (Ellis 1997: 87). This could entail, for example, exposing students to numerous exemplars of a specific form, making it more salient in spoken or written input, or requesting learners to read or listen to discrete sentences or continuous texts and indicate their understanding and processing of the structure by non-verbal or minimally verbal means. They could be asked to follow TPR-style instructions, make drawings, match sentences with pictures, fill out blanks in a written version of a text that is read to them, select the correct mother tongue translation of an L2 utterance, answer specially constructed questions, choose referents, express agreement or disagreement, and so forth (cf. Ellis 1998, 2002c; VanPatten 2002). Although, at first blush, such activities may resemble regular listening and reading comprehension tasks, they go beyond top-down, predominantly semantic processing, inducing students to attend to specific linguistic features and, therefore, forcing them to engage in bottom-up, grammatical processing of the input data.

In stark contrast to different forms of output practice, implicit FFI involving input-oriented techniques is still in its infancy and it remains on the sidelines of foreign language pedagogy, with the Polish educational context being no exception. These attitudes are plainly evident both at the level of methodology classes offered to prospective language teachers, workshops for in-service practitioners, coursebooks and other teaching materials brought out by leading publishers, and in actual teaching practice (cf. Ellis 2002c; Pawlak in press). While such sentiments and preferences are reflective of deeply-ingrained belief systems, a paucity of attempts at innovation in this area as well as learner expectations, they may be disconcerting in view of the fact that reception-based FFI draws considerable support from SLA theory and research. In fact, the rationale for the application of such an approach can be found in

the model of instructed L2 learning outlined in Chapter Three, and input-oriented microoptions are actually more in keeping with the claims of the weak interface position adopted therein than those requiring students to produce the target form in activities strung along the text-manipulation/text-creation continuum. This is because implicit instruction that draws upon different ways of manipulating input may obviate the need for initial explicit representation, thus eliminating the interface problem out of the equation. Equally importantly, neither the processes of noticing and cognitive comparison nor the comprehension dimension of implicit knowledge seem to be subject to developmental constraints.

One possible manifestation of comprehension-based implicit FFI are *input enrichment techniques*, such as *input flooding* or *input enhancement*, which are akin to *comprehension-based focused communication tasks* (see section 4.1.1. above), the only distinguishing feature being that here students are more or less overtly sensitized to a specific form. As regards *input flooding*, "the principle is simply that the more opportunities there are in the input for learners to notice a linguistic feature, the more likely they are to do so" (Doughty and Williams 1998c: 236). The employment of this technique is based on the assumption that perceptual salience can be enhanced through increasing the frequency of occurrence, and that enrichment of this kind will be sufficient to direct students' attention to the targeted feature, thus fostering its acquisition. For example, learners could be requested to read and listen to numerous stories containing multiple exemplars of the past simple tense, and then asked to complete various comprehension and production tasks related to their content, but no attempt would be made to provide them with explicit rule statements or metalinguistic comments. The effectiveness of input flooding is likely to be directly related to its duration and intensity, and there is always a danger that some students may fail to attend to and notice form-meaning-function mappings.

It is possible, however, to take the enrichment to the next level and make the targeted structure more prominent by means of *input enhancement*. Following Sharwood-Smith (1991, 1993), the term can refer to multifarious attempts at *flagging* grammatical features in the input, including explicit discussion, metalinguistic description, the provision of corrective feedback, the use of gestures, and the like. Here, however, the concept will be confined to more *covert* manipulation of the *language data themselves*, which does not exclude

the possibility that input enhancement can be incorporated into more elaborate instructional sequences and complemented with more explicit techniques and procedures (see section 4.2.1. below). The targeted form can be visually highlighted in written texts by means of typographical alterations, such as underlining, color-coding or manipulating the properties of the font (e.g. bolding, italics), or, when it comes to oral input, it could be enhanced by the use of special intonation contours or stress patterns. Alternatively, as is the case with implicit structure-based tasks, the salience of a structure can be *methodologically enhanced* through the inclusion of carefully designed follow-up activities or the employment of some form of corrective feedback (see sections 4.1.1.1. above and 4.2.1. below). Irrespective of the exact way in which the input is enhanced, there is no guarantee that external manipulation will translate into the kind of noticing and mental comparison that will lead to the integration of a TL form because it may become perceptually prominent but remain unnoticed linguistically (Sharwood-Smith 1991). Given such a danger, the choice of the most suitable ways of getting learners to attend to linguistic features in the input as well as the most propitious moment for their application represents a truly formidable challenge.

The effectiveness of input enrichment techniques in triggering noticing and fostering acquisition has been explored in a number of studies, the results of which are encouraging but indicate that such FFI microoptions may not be equally beneficial for all language features and may need to be complemented with explicit instruction.<sup>4</sup> Trahey and White (1993), for example, sought to determine whether massive input flooding would enable French learners to master the rules for adverb placement in English and found that while the subjects acquired the SAVO position, they failed to eliminate the SVAO pattern. This led them to hypothesize that this type of input enrichment may facilitate the acquisition of completely

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<sup>4</sup> The discussion that follows is confined to input enrichment in written texts since it is this area that has been of greatest interest to SLA researchers. A notable exception is a recent study conducted by Jensen and Vinther (2003) who operationalized input enhancement as exact repetition at the same or a slower rate of delivery, and showed that it assisted Danish learners of Spanish in improving their global comprehension, phonological decoding skills and production accuracy on a range of grammatical structures (e.g. articles, clitic pronouns, verbal morphology, etc.).

new features but is likely to be inadequate to help learners eradicate incorrect rules from their interlanguages if it is not accompanied by explicit instruction. In another investigation, Jourdenais et al. (1995) demonstrated that graphological alterations resulted in their English subjects noticing the Spanish preterit and imperfect and being more likely to use them.

The relative value of input flood and input enhancement was addressed by J. White (1998) who failed to find a difference and concluded that "although drawing the learners' attention to a linguistic feature may be sufficient to speed up acquisition of that feature, implicit FonF [focus on form] instruction may not be adequate in cases involving L1-L2 contrasts [where] (...) learners may need somewhat more explicit information" (1998: 106). Similar conclusions were reached in two studies which compared the effects of input enrichment and explicit instruction. In one, Williams (1995) explored the acquisition of participial adjectives and present passive by ESL students, and found that typographical highlighting by itself may be insufficient for teaching complex structures. In the other, Alanen (1995) reported that rule explanation led to superior performance on two aspects of a semiartificial language in comparison with enriched input.

Another two implementations of comprehension-based FFI are the *structured input component* of VanPatten's (1996) *processing instruction* (PI) and Ellis's (1995) *interpretation tasks* (IT). As will be recalled from section 3.3.5. in Chapter Three, the goal of PI is "to alter the processing strategies that learners take to the task of comprehension and to encourage them to make better form-meaning connections than they would if they were left to their own devices" (VanPatten 1996: 60).<sup>5</sup> In instruction of this kind, learners

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<sup>5</sup> VanPatten (2002) goes to great lengths to point out that PI should not be equated with reception-based approaches such as TPR or the Natural Approach since, in using a particular type of input to push learners away from nonoptimal processing strategies, it is better viewed as a type of input enhancement as defined by Sharwood-Smith (1993). While there may be some merit to VanPatten's position, it is the main tenet of input processing that language acquisition is input-based, and output-based activities can only help learners access the evolving system or increase the speed of delivery (cf. Salaberry 1998). Thus, despite the fact that it represents a focus on forms approach (Long 1991), it appears fully warranted to describe PI as a comprehension-based procedure in teaching grammar, a



are first informed about the target structure, they are told what to notice, what to pay attention to and why they should alter their default processing strategies. Subsequently, they are requested to work on a set of aural and written *structured input activities* which are intended to trigger the right kind of processing. The structured input stage of the lesson typically comprises two or three *referential activities* "for which there is a right or wrong answer and for which the learner must rely on the targeted grammatical form to get meaning", followed by *affective activities* "in which learners express an opinion, belief or some other affective response and are engaged in processing information about the real world" (VanPatten 2002: 766). Although PI appears to be similar to PPP in that it features a presentation stage followed by a practice stage, it differs from it in its reliance on input-based rather than output-oriented options, its identification of language features that pose learning difficulties, and, most importantly perhaps, its emphasis on determining the processing strategy responsible for the problem as well as an attempt to modify L1-based tendencies for input segmentation.<sup>6</sup>

As regards *interpretation tasks*, Ellis (1995: 94, 1997: 152) enumerates the following three goals they are intended to accomplish:

- 1) to enable learners to identify the relationship between a particular language form and the meanings and functions it realizes;
- 2) to enhance input, thus getting learners to attend to a potentially non-salient feature and promoting noticing;
- 3) to trigger the process of cognitive comparison, which aids learners in noticing the gap in their interlanguage systems.

On the face of it, then, it would seem that the rationale for the employment of such activities is akin to the justification invoked by Swain (1995) in support of getting learners to produce *pushed output*.

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position that is adopted in a number of recent publications (e.g. Ellis 2003).

<sup>6</sup> Although it could be argued that any beneficial effects of PI are the outcome of explicit presentation or explanation of the processing strategies rather than the use of structured input activities, VanPatten and Oikennon (1996) demonstrated that structured input alone leads to higher levels of comprehension of the targeted structure than explicit instruction and comparable levels of production.

Nonetheless, the means by which the same end is to be achieved are radically different.

Similarly to the structured-input phase of IP, a typical IT consists of a sequence of referential and affective learner-centered activities reflecting the three operations. It is designed in accordance with a set of general principles such as the presence of a spoken or written stimulus to which learners respond, minimal requirement for language production, the progression from comprehension through noticing form-meaning-function mappings to error identification, and the opportunity for learners to relate the input to their own lives (Ellis 1997, 2003). A practical realization of these principles is illustrated in Figure 4.3. It shows an affective activity used in the noticing stage of an IT designed to teach psychological predicate constructions in English, where learners had been observed to overgeneralize the unmarked pattern such as 'Mary loves cats' to the more marked order, as in 'Mary worries her mother'.

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An example of an interpretation task

- A. Answer the following questions:
1. Do tall people frighten you?
  2. Do people who cook impress you?
  3. Do smartly dressed people attract you?
  4. Do argumentative people annoy you?
  5. Are you interested in physically attractive people?
  6. Are you bored by self-important people?
  7. Are you irritated by fat people?
  8. Are you confused by clever people?
- B. On the basis of your responses in A, make a list of the qualities of people whom
1. you like.
  2. you dislike.

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*Figure 4.3. An example of an affective activity in the noticing phase of an interpretation task (adapted from Ellis 2003: 160).*

Although comprehension-based FFI represents an interesting pedagogical proposal and constitutes a stimulating alternative to more traditional approaches, its exponents are not very effective when used in isolation and complementing them with other instructional options may prove a practical necessity. For one thing, in most situations, the amount of classroom time is so limited that

teachers cannot afford to devote weeks or perhaps months to exposing students to numerous instances of the same form. It is equally unrealistic to expect them to laboriously prepare extra materials containing, say, typographical alterations as long as they are not provided with clear-cut evidence that such intervention is effective as well as guidelines concerning its focus, duration and intensity. An additional complication in the case of PI and IT is that designing successful activities of this kind calls for intimate metalinguistic knowledge and familiarity with input processing strategies in the L1 and L2, prerequisites that even methodologists may not possess. Obviously, such comments should not be taken to mean that input-oriented options should never be employed, but, rather, that their application is bound to be a rare occurrence and, unless they are part of a more elaborate teaching sequence, their instructional outcomes are likely to be modest.

### *Assessing the utility of output-oriented and input-oriented microoptions*

The value of the structured-input option has been put to the empirical test in a number of studies, most of which have sought to compare the learning outcomes of the application of diverse input-based and output-oriented microoptions, and, thus, provide helpful insights into the relative effectiveness of these distinct approaches to implicit FFI. An experiment that opened up this research agenda was conducted by VanPatten and Cadierno (1993) who examined the acquisition of Spanish word order and object pronouns by English learners. They demonstrated that reception-based instruction was superior to output-oriented teaching on a listening test, and as effective on a discrete-item written production test, a finding that was corroborated in a replication study undertaken by Cadierno (1995). More recently, empirical investigations of the effects of IP have been extended to structures in languages other than Spanish and they have produced findings similar to those in the original study for the English present progressive and the French causative (VanPatten 2002). Despite such encouraging results, the positive role of PI in fostering acquisition cannot be taken for granted, not least because most studies do not measure the subjects' ability to employ the targeted forms in communication (cf. DeKeyser et al. 2002). Moreover, the one that did include a measure of unplanned

production (VanPatten and Sanz 1995) failed to demonstrate improvement in this respect, which indicates that PI may not be sufficient to effect changes in implicit knowledge.

At the same time, copious empirical evidence is available which suggests that output-based options are as effective as input-based instruction in fostering the comprehension and production of the targeted features and they can even produce greater gains in some situations. DeKeyser and Sokalski (1996, 2001), for example, compared the influence of PI and output practice on the acquisition of Spanish direct object and conditional forms, on the grounds that while the former are difficult to comprehend but easy to produce, the reverse holds for the latter. The results were complex but lent some support to the claim "that comprehension and production skills in an L2 are to some extent learned separately", and led the researchers to conclude that "Van Patten and Cadierno's (1993) (...) results cannot be generalized" (2001: 105). In a study carried out by Collentine (1998), the target form was the Spanish subjunctive and no difference was found between the PI and output-based groups, a result corroborated by Salaberry (1997) for Spanish object pronouns. Three research projects that have provided evidence in favor of output-oriented FFI have been conducted by Allen (2000), Erlam (2003a) and Morgan-Short and Bowden (2006). In all of them both structured input and meaningful output practice resulted in improvement on comprehension and production tasks, but the latter led to superior performance, particularly in the subjects' ability to produce the target forms.

In the light of such mixed research findings, it would be patently imprudent to claim that there exists one infallible approach to developing implicit TL knowledge, and advocate exclusive reliance on some FFI microoptions to the virtual exclusion of others. Rather, logic dictates that the production and reception of grammatical features should be viewed as complementary. As regards output practice, it assists the acquisition of structures learners are ready to internalize, aids students in automatizing their implicit or explicit knowledge, and may be instrumental in fostering the acquisition and greater control over lexicogrammatical units. Not less significant is the fact that output-oriented options still predominate in the available teaching materials and continue to be preferred in many educational settings. At the same time, however, there exist tangible benefits of input-oriented options, the applica-

tion of which may circumvent the limitations imposed by processing constraints, permit influencing implicit knowledge directly, and play a part in the acquisition of exemplars and formulae. Since such techniques are still largely unknown and only very rarely employed in classroom practice, it is clearly necessary to make teachers cognizant of them by including examples of input enrichment or interpretation tasks in coursebooks and emphasizing their usefulness in methodology courses and workshops.

Obviously, this is bound to be an arduous task in view of the fact that innovations necessitating changes in methodological practices, requiring modifications of deep-seated beliefs, or regarded as unfeasible may be difficult to implement (Stoller 1994). Such words of caution apply in particular to the Polish educational setting, where the number of contact hours is so small and the expectations so high that teachers are bound to rebel against the idea of devoting large amounts of classroom time to input-based activities the success of which is by no means guaranteed. Still, even here, attempts could be made to profitably integrate such microoptions into longer instructional sequences, a point that will be dealt with in section 4.2.2. below. After all, as Ellis (2006: 99) wisely points out, debating the superiority of input-based and output-oriented techniques may be pointless "because, in practice, both options are likely to involve input-processing and production (...) It is, therefore, not surprising that both (...) have been shown to result in acquisition".

#### 4.1.2. Feedback options

Although the provision of *corrective feedback*, or "evaluative information available to learners concerning their linguistic performance" (Larsen-Freeman 2003: 123), is not typically associated with teaching grammar, it does provide information about what is not possible in the TL in the form of *reactive negative evidence* (see Chapter One, section 1.1.) and, thus, represents an important methodological microoption in FFI. In fact, as shown in Figure 4.1., *feedback options* can be put on a par with *learner performance options* and, according to some researchers, they are a crucial means of achieving a *focus on form* (Long 1991). Viewed in this way, the term *corrective feedback* is by no means limited to what is traditionally regarded as *error correction*, where learners' erroneous utterances, usually produced in the per-

formance of some kind of text-manipulation activity, are followed by the provision of the accurate form or verbal and non-verbal signals intended to elicit self-correction. Indeed, it can also apply to less obtrusive ways of getting students to notice the gaps and holes in their interlanguages in text-creation activities or focused and unfocused communication tasks, in which case it is customary to talk about *reactive focus on form* (Ellis, Basturkmen and Loewen 2002). Moreover, in contrast to what is widely assumed, corrective feedback does not have to be *output-based* and seek to elicit the production of the correct form from the learner (e.g. an overt request for repetition), but it can also be *input-based*, where the correct version is modeled but no repetition of the utterance or its part is required (e.g. a recast) (Ellis 2006).

Irrespective of the type of corrective feedback and the context in which it occurs, the treatment of learner errors has always been an extremely controversial area in language pedagogy. In fact, there are many researchers who are skeptical about the value of reactive negative evidence and go as far as postulating that it should be reduced to the minimum or proscribed altogether (Krashen 1985; Truscott 1996, 1999). The rationale behind this stance mirrors in many respects the justifications invoked in support of non-interventionist positions, the additional arguments being that corrective feedback is rare in L1 acquisition as well as natural out-of-class communication, it puts learners on the defensive, makes them avoid using difficult structures and encourages a focus on form at the expense of meaning (Krashen 1982; Allwright and Bailey 1991; Larsen-Freeman 2003). While such concerns have to be heeded as there are indeed limitations to what corrective feedback can attain in acquisitional terms, it can still contribute to language development in quite distinct ways. Its effectiveness, however, is likely to be a function of the form it takes and the circumstances under which it is provided.

### *Types and contributions of corrective feedback*

Figure 4.1. shows that a basic distinction can be made between *overt feedback*, sometimes referred to as *explicit* or *direct*, where learners' attention is deliberately drawn to a specific grammatical error, and *covert feedback*, also known as *implicit* or *indirect*, which resembles the feedback found in child-directed speech and is provided in such a

way so as not to interrupt the flow of communication. Although both types of reactive negative evidence have an important role to play in FFI, their incidence is likely to depend on whether the focus of a lesson or its segment is on *accuracy* or *fluency*, and they cater to the development of distinct types of TL mental representation.

In traditional grammar lessons following the PPP sequence, much of the corrective feedback is overt in nature, occurs immediately after the error has been committed and requires the production of the correct version at some point, which is taken as evidence that a particular linguistic form has been successfully acquired. Consequently, learners could be interrupted and immediately supplied with the accurate form, with the teacher producing the correct version of the utterance and stressing the originally incorrect part (e.g. 'Jack has GONE to Paris'), focusing on the form itself ('Not *has went* but *has gone*'), resorting to metalinguistic comments or explanations (e.g. 'We say *he has gone* because the present perfect requires the past participle'), and making sure that they finally get it right (e.g. 'Repeat!' 'Once again!'). Alternatively, students could be shown incorrectness and given a chance to self-repair by means of verbal and non-verbal correction techniques, such as repeating (e.g. 'Again!'), echoing (e.g. 'He GO to school?'), questions (e.g. 'Is it correct?'), predetermined gestures or facial expressions (e.g. pointing behind could indicate past tense reference), and many others (cf. Harmer 2001). Of course, negative feedback provided in the course of controlled production practice activities could also be covert, as when the teacher reformulates the utterance without having the learner repeat it (e.g. modeling the correct sentence, repeating the original question of initiation, etc.), but, unlike Seedhouse (1997), the present author found it to be infrequent in accuracy contexts (Pawlak 2003c, 2004d).<sup>7</sup>

As regards the value of error correction during accuracy work, its effects have not really been subject to proper empirical investigation in separation from production practice of which it is

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<sup>7</sup> Besides, even if it were prevalent, it is very unlikely that such an intervention would remain implicit in situations where a specific form is being practiced. It is also unclear what positive effects could possibly accrue from this type of treatment considering the fact that the main aim of text-manipulation activities is to help learners gain greater control of relevant rules and apply them accurately in planned discourse. Logically, in such situations, their attention should be explicitly directed to the errors.

considered to be an integral part. Thinking back to the model of instructed language learning in Chapter Three, it could be hypothesized that such immediate and largely explicit corrective feedback mainly serves the function of proceduralizing explicit, declarative knowledge of a specific feature (DeKeyser 1998), enhancing the accuracy of its use and automatizing access to it in monitored performance. As Schachter (1991) points out, it may also help the learner *reduce the hypothesis space*, or limit the number of possible hypotheses about the TL that have to be tested. At the same time, however, it is unlikely to have more than a negligible direct impact on the growth of developmentally constrained implicit knowledge. Thus, the repetition of the correct verb form in a sentence-completion exercise tells us nothing about IL development, not to mention the fact that it could be indicative of item rather than system learning of explicit representation. All of these problems are aptly summarized by Lightbown (2000: 446) who comments: "learners' interlanguage behavior does not change suddenly when they are told they have made an error".

While most researchers would probably subscribe to the opinion that the value of corrective feedback that occurs in conjunction with production practice is limited, many would probably agree that "there are reasons for believing that it may prove more effective if it takes place in the context of activities in which the primary focus is on meaning rather than on form" (Ellis 1998: 52). For one thing, theoretical support for such an assumption comes from the claims of the modified version of the Interaction Hypothesis (Long 1996) as well as the Output Hypothesis (Swain 1985, 1995), both of which envisage an important role for reactive negative evidence in helping learners notice the gaps and holes in their IL systems and encouraging them to modify their output. The same could be said about Skill-Learning Theory since, although it condones error correction in controlled practice as a way of restructuring the initial declarative representation, it posits that if language forms are to be fully automatized and become part of procedural knowledge, students need to employ them in communicative activities and be supplied with appropriate feedback. To quote Johnson (1996: 126), "Learners seem to need to see for themselves what has gone wrong, in the ROCs [real-operating conditions] under which they went wrong". A convincing case for the provision of corrective feedback during meaning-centered activities can also be mounted on the basis



of the theory of instructed language acquisition presented in Chapter Three, on the grounds that not only does such intervention improve access to features that are already part of implicit knowledge but it may also be instrumental in fostering noticing and allowing cognitive comparisons, thus setting the scene for the macroprocesses of mapping and restructuring. Some evidence for the value of continuous integration of form and meaning by means of sustained corrective feedback also comes from research into French immersion and intensive ESL classes (Lightbown and Spada 1990; Spada and Lightbown 1993; Lyster 1994).

Obviously, the feedback provided in the context of communicative activities can take on many diverse forms which can be both covert and overt, and vary in terms of their potential impact on language development.<sup>8</sup> In their frequently-cited paper, Lyster and Ranta (1997) distinguish six types of negative feedback that they identified on the basis of their analysis of interaction in immersion classrooms (cf. Ellis 1998: 52; Lyster 2001: 272):

- 1) recasts, which involve implicit reformulation of all or part of a student's utterance in accordance with target language norms but preserve its intended meaning;
- 2) explicit correction, where the teacher makes it clear that an utterance is deviant in some way and provides the correct form;
- 3) clarification requests, where phrases such as 'Pardon?', 'I don't understand' or 'What do you mean?' are employed to indicate lack of understanding;
- 4) elicitation, which involves an attempt to directly elicit the reformulation from students through using a question (e.g. 'How do we say that in English?'), pausing to allow them to complete an utterance (e.g. 'L. Peter live in Paris T. Peter...'), or asking them to rephrase their contribution (e.g. 'Could you try to say it in a different way?');

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<sup>8</sup> Obviously, the decision-making process involved in providing feedback on errors committed during meaning-focused instruction is extremely complex and involves much more than deciding whether the corrective technique should be implicit or explicit. In the first place, the teacher has to notice the error, and, then, decisions have to be made whether the error should be remedied, when and how this should happen, as well as who should supply the correct form (cf. Allwright and Bailey 1991; Pawlak 2004d).

- 5) metalinguistic clues, where technical information is used to inform the learner of the error (e.g. 'L. He buy a new house T. Past tense!');
- 6) repetition, in which case the teacher repeats all or part of the ill-formed utterance, highlighting the error by adjusting stress or intonation.

It is clear from this classification that the distinction between *covert* and *overt corrective feedback* supplied during message conveyance should be viewed as a continuum rather than a dichotomy, with particular techniques being more or less explicit or implicit. While it is unambiguous that *recasts*, which are also common in child-directed language (Farrar 1992), are the most covert, and *explicit correction*, as the term suggests, is the most overt, the remaining microoptions (3-6) fall somewhere in between. Lyster and Ranta (1997) and Lyster (2001) group them under the rubric of *negotiation of form* to underscore their didactic function, and set them apart from *negotiation of meaning* which is a conversational device and aims "to resolve communication breakdowns and to work toward mutual comprehension" (Pica et al. 1989: 273). However, although all the four techniques provide learners with opportunities for self-repair, elicitation, repetition and metalinguistic clues are clearly nearer the overt end of the continuum, while clarification requests are closer to the covert pole since they are much less intrusive and, in some situations, learners might even be oblivious to the fact that they represent corrective moves. A similar stance is adopted by Ellis, Basturkmen and Loewen (2002) who imply that negotiation directed at language forms is usually implicit, and make a clear-cut distinction between *conversational focus on form*, where an error is followed by a clarification request or confirmation check because it causes a communication problem, and *didactic focus on form*, in which case the message is comprehensible but the teacher elects to negotiate the erroneous form because of the instructional agenda followed.

### *Exploring the effectiveness of feedback options*

While a number of recent studies have shown that the provision of corrective feedback during communicative activities has a beneficial effect on interlanguage development (e.g. Pawlak 2003a, 2004b; Ishida 2004; Lyster 2004), an important question arises as to the relative value of particular feedback options in fostering the

acquisition of specific TL forms. Given the significance of this issue, it is somewhat surprising that there is a remarkable paucity of such research, with a predominance of descriptive studies, many of which have explored corrective feedback provided during meaning-centered lessons from the broader perspective of *incidental focus on form* (see section 4.2.1. below), treating it as a *reactive* variant thereof rather than an instructional option in its own right. In investigations of this kind, the unit of analysis is typically a *focus on form episode* (FFE), "which includes all discourse pertaining to the specific linguistic structure that is the focus of attention" whereas the effectiveness of pedagogic intervention is measured in terms of *uptake*, "which refers to a learner's response to the information provided about a linguistic item in an FFE" (Loewen 2003: 318). Depending on whether this information is incorporated into a learner's output, uptake may be *successful*, in which case it is also referred to as *repair*, or unsuccessful.<sup>9</sup>

One descriptive study that focused exclusively on the incidence and effectiveness of different types of negative feedback was the one by Lyster and Ranta (1997), mentioned earlier in this section. They found that although recasts accounted for 55% of all the feedback moves, they were the least likely to get the students to repair their utterances, and it was elicitations and metalinguistic clues that resulted in the highest incidence of successful and unsuccessful uptake. A subsequent reanalysis of the data conducted by Lyster (1998, 2001) showed that although recasts were most frequently used to address inaccuracies in grammar, they proved to be the least successful in getting learners to incorporate the correct form. The ineffectiveness of covert input-based feedback options has been confirmed in ESL classrooms in Canada (Panova and Lyster 2002) as well as in a variety of foreign language contexts, including the Polish one (Mackey, Gass and McDonough 2000; Lochtmann 2000; Pawlak 2005b). On the other hand, however, there are descriptive studies the results of which indicate that recasting may be sufficiently salient and result in levels of repair comparable to those produced by overt feedback types, on condition that learners have the benefit of explicit explanations and activities

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<sup>9</sup> The term *uptake* is also used in a very different sense to refer to what students are able to report learning during or at the end of the lesson by completing the so-called *uptake chart* (cf. Ellis 1994).

directed at specific points of grammar, and are thus oriented to accuracy and language forms. Such positive findings have been reported by Ohta (2000b), Ellis, Basturkmen and Loewen (2001a) and Y. Sheen (2004). Taken together, the outcomes of such research appear to indicate that, particularly in communicative and content-based classes, students experience difficulty interpreting implicit corrective moves as feedback on form. However, this problem is ameliorated to some extent when covert feedback options are used in conjunction with explicit instruction, a situation which is the hallmark of most foreign language classrooms (cf. Nicholas, Lightbown and Spada 2001).

Although Loewen (2005) has recently provided tentative evidence that successful uptake in a FFE is a significant predictor of correct scores on tests containing items relating to the linguistic features targeted in the output of individual learners, it is clear that immediate repair does not constitute ample proof that a specific form has been integrated into the interlanguage or its accessibility has been improved (cf. Ellis 1998; Larsen-Freeman 2001a). Consequently, in many recent studies, overt and covert feedback options have been employed to address structures known to be the source of persistent errors, and the effects of such treatments have been measured on posttests. But, here, again, the results have been inconclusive. Carroll and Swain (1993), for example, examined the effect of different types of feedback and reported longer-term superiority of overt options such as providing metalinguistic information. More recently, Leeman (2000) showed that it is enhanced salience rather than implicit negative evidence that accounts for the beneficial effects of recasting, and Lyster (2004) found that prompts were more effective than recasts which, in turn, performed similarly to a no-feedback condition.

While such findings could be interpreted as testifying to the effectiveness of overt rather than covert negative feedback, there are also studies which have provided evidence to the contrary, albeit usually with some important qualifications. In one research project, Long, Inagaki and Ortega (1998) demonstrated that recasts were more likely to bring about short-term improvement than models but such positive effects varied considerably depending on the target feature. Mackey and Philip (1998), in turn, found that the effectiveness of recasts may be related to the subjects' developmental readiness whereas Doughty and Varela (1998) showed that

*corrective recasting*, where the reformulation is preceded by the repetition of a learner's erroneous utterance, helped the subjects use the English past tense more frequently and progress further along the IL continuum. Of considerable interest is also Han's (2002) study which not only found a positive effect of recasts but also identified the key conditions for the effective functioning of this type of feedback. These include individualized attention, a consistent focus on one aspect of the TL, the provision of intensive and extended instruction, as well as the focus on a feature that learners have already partly acquired (i.e. developmental readiness). A similar stance is adopted by Doughty (2001), who argues that the value of recasts can be attributed to the provision thereof within the *cognitive window of opportunity* (see Chapter Three, section 3.3.3.), but admits that such an implicit corrective move may be ambiguous when it is one of many types of reformulation, it addresses a variety of errors, and learners have not been primed to attend to particular language forms.

Much more consistent and promising are the findings of experimental research which has explored the effectiveness of clarification requests as a means of attaining *didactic focus on form* aimed at specific TL features as opposed to confirmation checks seeking to resolve genuine communication breakdowns. This type of reactive negative evidence is referred to *output enhancement* and, although it can also be located near the covert and unobtrusive end of the corrective feedback continuum, it is *output-based* in pushing learners to improve the quality of their productions, and, therefore, probably more salient than input-based recasts. Beneficial effects of such pedagogic intervention have been reported by Nobuyoshi and Ellis (1993) as well as Takashima (1994) who found that focused clarification requests led to more accurate use of the target features than unfocused meaning negotiation. Similarly, Takashima and Ellis (1999) showed that output enhancement led to greater accuracy in the use of the English past tense, an additional finding being that such benefits may atrophy with time and that the learners who had the chance to produce pushed output were not at an advantage in comparison with those who just overheard it. Despite such limitations, Takashima and Ellis are unwavering in their conviction that "(...) focused feedback is a viable pedagogic option, even in larger classes" (1999: 187). The encouraging results of previous research have been corroborated in the Polish context in a study conducted

by the present author (Pawlak 2003a), which is of particular interest since it examined the effect of a combination of recasts and clarification requests. Although the experimental subjects were initially less accurate in the use of the English third person '-s', they outperformed the controls on three posttests, showing sustained improvement on each successive test. Such dramatic and consistent accuracy gains indicate that the effectiveness of reactive negative evidence can be augmented by using different constellations of input- and output-based feedback options.

In the light of the empirical evidence presented in this section, there are strong grounds to repudiate Krashen's categorical pronouncement that "even under the best of conditions, with the most learning-oriented students, teacher corrections will not produce results that will live up to the expectations of many instructors" (1982: 119). While it is true that the value of corrective feedback provided during accuracy-oriented text-manipulation activities is limited and may at best lead to the growth, restructuring and automatization of explicit knowledge, it appears fully warranted to argue that reactive negative evidence addressing specific linguistic features in fluency-based tasks does affect implicit knowledge. At the same time, however, the available research findings are still so scant and inconclusive that it is difficult to use them as a basis for definitive pedagogic recommendations concerning the value of particular feedback options. This is because too few features in too few languages and instructional settings have been targeted, not all microoptions have been investigated to the same degree, the delayed effects of reactive negative evidence are yet to be thoroughly explored, and, since researchers often operationalize the same feedback moves in different ways, some results are impossible to reconcile. What the studies do demonstrate, however, is that the exact type of corrective feedback and the degree of its explicitness may be less consequential than learners' developmental readiness, the extent to which a given feature has been acquired, the focus, intensity and duration of FFI, as well as students' proficiency level or their familiarity with the aims of the lesson. Besides, as Larsen-Freeman (2003: 136) points out, "(...) it is unlikely that there is one feedback strategy that is better than others for all occasions. Instead, teachers need to develop a repertoire of techniques that can be deployed as appropriate. Effective use of strategies results when teachers adapt their practice to their students' learning".

As regards the Polish educational context, the contributions of appropriately delivered and timed reactive negative evidence cannot be overestimated, and they are perhaps much greater than in settings where students have copious exposure to the TL. In particular, learners could greatly benefit from focused corrective feedback provided in the context of meaning-centered activities, as this would allow them to notice the relationships between specific forms and the meanings and functions they realize, a goal that is seldom attained in the foreign language classroom. Obviously, teachers cannot go beyond the bounds of feasibility and, thus, as was the case with structured input techniques, they are in no position to devote a series of lessons to communication tasks during which a specific point of grammar will be targeted by means of recasts or clarification requests, not least because there is no guarantee that such pedagogical intervention will be efficacious. Nonetheless, as will become clear from the discussion of the macrooptions in FFI, feedback of this kind can be incorporated into text-creation activities, such as those employed in the last stage of the PPP, or constitute an effective pedagogic tool during revision classes. Beyond doubt, in these and many similar situations, "an error potentially represents a teachable moment" (Larsen-Freeman 2003: 126) and the negative evidence students receive provides them with the opportunity to learn something new or improve the quality and accessibility of old knowledge. As Chaudron (1988: 133) wisely commented, "from the learners' point of view (...) the use of feedback may constitute the most potent source of improvement in (...) target language development".

## 4.2. Macrooptions in form-focused instruction

The present chapter would offer a rather impoverished account of the available options in FFI if it failed to consider *instructional macrooptions*, or the higher-level methodological choices that teachers can draw upon in planning individual lessons, lesson sequences or entire courses, and materials writers can utilize in designing course-books, grammar practice books or other resources. There can be little doubt that decisions taken in all of these areas are bound to have as far-reaching ramifications for the effectiveness of grammar teaching as the selection of specific learner performance and

feedback options. After all, it is one thing to know that explicit knowledge can profitably be developed by means of C-R tasks or to be acquainted with the research findings concerning the relative value of input-based and output-oriented techniques in contributing to the growth of implicit representation, and quite another to be able to combine these microoptions in such a way that the instructional goals of a lesson are in fact attained. Not less significantly, no matter what form our intervention will eventually take, its effectiveness is also likely to be a function of the TL features it is directed at, since not all forms are equally learnable, useful or amenable to a particular type of instruction. Finally, it is of paramount importance to determine the place of FFI in the curriculum, a crucial decision that has to be based on the recommendations of SLA theorists and researchers, on the one hand, and learners' needs and preferences as well as the exigencies of the local context, on the other.

Given the significance of methodological macrooptions, the present section aims to spell out the choices that practitioners can make with regard to planning and implementing grammar-based lessons, integrating the structural component into the syllabus, and selecting the features to be targeted by instruction. Obviously, the following discussion offers a rather simplified view of what designing language lessons and courses involves. This is because FFI constitutes but one and, as some would vehemently argue, perhaps not the most important aspect of foreign language pedagogy which has to concern itself with honing all the skills and subsystems so that students will ultimately develop communicative ability in the TL.

#### 4.2.1. Planning and implementing grammar-based lessons and lesson sequences

There can be little doubt that the emphasis on the formal aspects of the TL in a particular course is likely to vary from one lesson to another, with some classes focusing on introducing and practicing preselected grammatical structures and others only dealing with language forms in the context of more communicative tasks and activities. Also, on many occasions, the grammar component in the form of explicit explanations or brief metalingual comments may constitute just one element in a lesson, either acting as a prelude to



an upcoming activity, emerging in response to a problem signaled by the students, or, perhaps, being unrelated to its course but, for one reason or another, viewed as crucial by the teacher. Obviously, there is the possibility that some classes will focus exclusively on meaning and message conveyance, and no attempt whatsoever will be made to direct learners' attention to specific linguistic features. However, although lessons of this kind are invaluable in developing communicative ability, they are rather infrequent in the Polish context, perhaps with the exception of classes taught to very young children, highly proficient learners or students in foreign languages departments.

Such a state of affairs should not be surprising in view of the fact that, in the vast majority of cases, language instruction in school is confined to three or four 45-minute lessons a week, meager out-of-class exposure precludes learners from acquiring TL forms naturally, and many teachers and students are convinced that grammar teaching is indispensable. Additionally, despite the sanguine comments on the back covers of coursebooks, their content still revolves around carefully selected and graded grammatical structures, with the authors going to great lengths to ensure that learners have numerous opportunities to encounter them in different tasks and activities. Given such realities, it is typically unfeasible to accomplish an exclusive focus on meaning in an entire lesson, and, thus, even when teachers set up discussion and information-gap group work tasks, some form of pedagogic intervention is bound to occur at one stage or another. For this reason, the main point of reference in this section will be Ellis's (2001b) classification of the types of form-focused instruction, briefly mentioned earlier in the present chapter. As can be seen from Figure 4.5. below, he distinguishes between *focus on forms*, *planned focus on form* and *reactive focus on form*.

Type of FFI	Primary focus	Distribution
1. Focus on forms	Form	Intensive
2. Planned focus on form	Meaning	Intensive
3. Incidental focus on form	Meaning	Extensive

Figure 4.5. Types of form-focused instruction (adapted from Ellis 2001b: 17).

*Focus on forms*

It is rather uncontroversial that most FFI in Polish schools is of the *focus on forms* kind (Type 1), where "the teacher and students are aware that the primary purpose of the activity is to learn a preselected form and that learners are required to focus their attention on some specific form intensively in order to learn it" (Ellis 2001b: 17). In other words, the point of grammar to be covered in a particular lesson is selected on the basis of a structural syllabus because it is deemed teachable at a particular stage in the course, and instructional microoptions are chosen and sequenced in such a way that not only are learners provided with numerous opportunities to encounter and use the target feature but are also cognizant of the purpose of the techniques and procedures employed. A typical focus on forms lesson follows the *presentation-practice-production* sequence, also known as the *PPP* or *3Ps approach*, where a single grammatical feature is introduced deductively or inductively in a meaningful context (e.g. a picture, spoken or written text or dialog), which is followed by a number of text-manipulation and, in the final stage, text-creation activities. For example, students could be requested to read a text with multiple examples of the past continuous tense and provided with a rule concerning its form and use, then be instructed to complete a number of controlled practice activities such as sentence-completion or translation exercises and, finally, asked to use the structure more spontaneously to express their own ideas by, for example, talking about an interesting event they witnessed (cf. Skehan 1998; Harmer 2001). It is clear, then, that an instructional sequence of this kind implements the principles of Skill-Learning Theory and the *strong interface position* it embodies (see Chapter Three, sections 3.3. and 3.3.1.).

While it would be superfluous to enumerate once again all the theoretical and empirical arguments against such a view of acquisition, suffice it to say here that some structures are developmentally constrained, L2 learning does not proceed in an additive fashion and, even when learners seem to have mastered a given feature, backsliding is bound to occur. Besides, the PPP procedure has been criticized on pedagogical grounds as being entirely teacher-centered, too inflexible to render the many approaches to language in the classroom, as well as too restrictive in terms of the learner's experience of the TL (cf. Scrivener 1994; Willis 1996; Harmer 2001).

Also, somewhat ironically perhaps, the ultimate goal of aiding students in developing the ability to use the target form freely in spontaneous communication is seldom achieved. This, however, may not testify to the ineffectiveness of the procedure as such but, rather, be the outcome of the fact that many teachers have a tendency to neglect the final P and satisfy themselves with the provision of activities falling near the more controlled pole of the text-manipulation/text-creation continuum (Pawlak in press).

Despite its evident flaws, the 3Ps sequence continues to enjoy immense popularity and, as Skehan (1998: 94) points out, "it is probably still the commonest teaching approach when judged on a world-wide basis". Skehan goes on to comment that such durability can be ascribed to its excellent relationship with teacher training and practitioners' sense of professionalism, its emphasis on demonstrating the power relations in the classroom, the ease of implementation, as well as the relatively unproblematic evaluation of the instructional outcomes due to the existence of tangible goals, precise syllabuses and easily testable items. Most importantly perhaps, the decision to opt for this well-tried procedure stems from the blatant lack of a feasible alternative for pedagogy that would not only be grounded in theory and research, but also pedagogically viable and easily translatable into classroom practice and syllabus organization. To quote from Skehan again, as long as such a practicable proposal is not forthcoming, "alternative approaches will only appeal to those who are teaching in favorable circumstances, or who are unusually determined (or, it has to be admitted, are fashion victims)" (1998: 95). Finally, it is perhaps simply premature to claim, as Lewis (1998: 11) does, that "the PPP paradigm is, and always was, nonsense", and advocate its complete rejection since, when appropriately implemented and complemented with implicit structure-based tasks, it can still constitute a useful pedagogic tool (cf. Widdowson 2003; Ellis 2006). Even if, as some theorists would have it, the sequence does not directly aid the growth of implicit knowledge, it can surely accelerate the passage through developmental sequences, lead to greater control of exemplars and contribute to the development, restructuring and automatization of explicit knowledge, which, in the long run, benefits interlanguage change.

Luckily, the controversial PPP paradigm is by no means the only way in which the *focus on forms approach* can be implemented and, in fact, a number of other solutions have been proposed. Byrne

(1986), for instance, has suggested that the three phases of the sequence should be joined in a circle, with the learners being actively involved in selecting the starting point of a lesson and being able to decide, together with the teacher, whether the presentation and practice stages can be omitted. Scrivener (1994), in turn, has advanced a proposal, known as *ARC*, that postulates describing language classes in terms of three elements, namely: *authentic use (A)*, which refers to tasks aimed at developing learners' communicative ability (e.g. information-gap activities performed in pairs or groups), *restricted use (R)*, where controlled practice activities are employed (e.g. drills, exercises, role plays), and *clarification and focus (C)*, which is aimed at developing students' explicit representation (e.g. direct explanations, error analysis). With the help of this system, it is possible to describe not only a traditional PPP lesson (CRA), but also other instructional designs, such as CARC, where a direct explanation is followed by communication games, text-completion exercises and an analysis of the errors committed by learners, or ARCARC which would represent a *repeated task-based sequence* (see below). As a result, Scrivener's model is a powerful descriptive tool which can better reflect what actually transpires in the language classroom. Somewhat similar is Harmer's (1998) *ESA model*, which also identifies three components present in any teaching sequence, namely: *Engage (E)*, where students' interest is aroused and their emotions involved as they are asked to relate the topic to their own experiences, *study (S)*, which entails focusing learners' attention on a linguistic feature (not necessarily a point of grammar) and conducting various text-manipulation activities, and *activate (A)*, where students are encouraged to get engaged in tasks fostering genuine communication, such as debates or discussions. Thus, it is possible to envisage an ESA sequence, akin in all important respects to the PPP, but also what Harmer refers to as a *boomerang sequence* (EASA), in which students "are not taught language until and unless they have shown (...) that they have a need for it" (1998: 28).

A much more elaborate alternative which is firmly grounded in SLA theory and research has been put forward by Fotos (2001). She seeks to spell out a set of guidelines for designing communicative grammar lessons utilizing explicit instruction, thus showing that, contrary to what Long (1991) claims, an approach based on systematic coverage of preselected language forms can contribute to IL development. In her view, the teacher should first orient students

to the upcoming activities and try to develop their explicit knowledge by means of the deductive or inductive approach, which is believed to act as an advance organizer. In the next stage, students perform an explicit structure-based or C-R task, where they use the TL to produce and communicate about the target structure. This is followed by further explanations and demonstrations, numerous exercises and tasks gradually moving from text-manipulation to text-creation accompanied by corrective feedback, and, in the last stage, the provision of plentiful communicative exposure. Since it is clear that it would be difficult to squeeze all of these activities into a single lesson, a teaching sequence consisting of several classes would probably have to be devised, a point that will be taken up at the end of this section.

### *Planned focus on form*

*Planned focus on form* (Type 2), also referred to as *proactive* (Doughty and Williams 1998c), resembles the *focus on forms approach* in that it involves predetermining the grammatical feature to be targeted, but it differs from it in some key respects. For one thing, a specific form is not selected on the basis of a linguistic syllabus, but, rather, because it is known to be the source of learning difficulty or viewed as the culprit of persistent errors in a particular group of students. Equally importantly, "(...) the attention to form occurs in interaction where the primary focus is on meaning (...) [and] learners are not made aware that a specific form is being targeted and thus are expected to function primarily as 'language users' rather than 'learners' (...)" (Ellis, Basturkmen and Loewen 2002: 421).

Instruction of this kind could be input-based, where students could be requested to perform *receptive focused communication tasks* or communicative activities providing them with *enriched input* in the form of *input flood* or *input enhancement*. Alternatively, learners could be asked to complete *output-based focused communication tasks* which require the application of a specific feature as a means of conveying genuine messages (see sections 4.1.1.1. and 4.1.1.2.2. for more information about such activities). Yet another possibility, which, for some reason, Ellis (2001b) fails to include in his discussion, is enhancing the salience of a preselected TL feature methodologically by means of intensive *recasting* or *output enhancement* (see sections 4.1.1.1. and 4.1.2. above) each time students commit an error involv-

ing its use. As was noted elsewhere, however, concealing the instructional agenda may prove to be a futile attempt. In fact, especially in foreign language contexts, it makes much more sense to utilize planned focus on form as a way of providing students with opportunities to deploy the previously taught features in communication, as this can help them make the leap from explicit to implicit representation or automatize partly acquired items. Seen in this way, implicit structure-based tasks would act as a follow-up to text-creation activities and, thus, as suggested by Bruton (2002), planned focus on form could be regarded as an extension of the production phase of the PPP.

The difficulty of keeping learners in the dark about the instructional focus of a lesson is also evident in the *weak variant of task-based instruction* which "does enable preselection of structures and then attempts to find satisfactory tasks which do not lose communicative qualities while still allowing structural focus" (Skehan 2002: 91). Thus, it can perhaps be regarded as a more reasonable interpretation of Type 2 form-focused instruction. An example of how this approach can be implemented in practice can be found in the work of Samuda (2001), who proposes a class-oriented lesson sequence in which students are provided with input data, operate on them in performing knowledge-constructing or knowledge-activating tasks, and then have a chance to reflect upon and consolidate the language form in focus. The point is that not only is the feature selected in advance and incorporated into task design, but that the teacher can also intervene in the task stage, implicitly inducing attention to it or even providing metalingual comments and direct explanations. This means that although the students have an extended *need to mean*, they are aware of the structural focus of the activity. A similar view of planned focus on form can be found in Skehan's (1998) cognitive approach to tasks, where task design features are manipulated to contrive differential foci on *fluency*, *accuracy* and *complexity*, and direct instruction or consciousness-raising can be part of the pre-task phase. Moreover, the latter not only serves the purpose of introducing particular forms, but also helps learners mobilize and recycle language, pushes them to interpret tasks in more demanding ways and eases the processing load. Obviously, there are lessons where the initial interpretation of planned focus on form may be viable, but, taking

into account the realities of the Polish educational setting, such cases are an exception rather than the norm.

### *Incidental focus on form*

Even more difficult to implement in the foreign language classroom is *incidental focus on form* (Type 3), which involves the application of *unfocused communication tasks*, such as reasoning-gap or opinion-gap activities (Prabhu 1987), intended to elicit general samples of language rather than trap specific structures through their design.<sup>10</sup> While tasks of this kind also form the mainstay of purely meaning-centered, non-interventionist approaches, the main difference lies in the fact that, in this case, the teacher reacts to the forms that are problematic to the learners, albeit in an unpremeditated way. Obviously, if the intervention is to occur within meaning-focused activities inviting learners to use a wide range of structures, it can only be *extensive* in nature, "that is, many different forms are likely to be treated rather than a single form addressed many times" (Ellis, Basturkmen and Loewen 2002: 421).<sup>11</sup>

Incidental focus on form can be either *reactive*, when the teacher responds to the actual or perceived errors committed by students, or *preemptive*, in which case a query is raised about a particular item that is perceived as problematic, even though no

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<sup>10</sup> Doughty and Williams (1998c) refer to this type of FFI as *reactive focus on form*. Such a label, however, is rather misleading since it is customary to further subdivide incidental focus on form into *preemptive* or *reactive*, depending on whether the intervention precedes or follows the error.

<sup>11</sup> Ellis, Basturkmen and Loewen (2002) make the point that whether a focus on form is planned or incidental depends not as much on the type of task used as on the teacher's orientation to that task. Of course, there is some merit to such a stance, as it is possible to envisage a situation where an activity has been planned to elicit a specific feature but, for some reason, the teacher chooses to also direct the students' attention to other language forms. Conversely, the use of unfocused communication tasks does not necessarily prevent the teacher from singling out a particular feature for intervention when he decides on the spot that students are experiencing difficulty in its application. On the other hand, however, it is reasonable to assume that, by virtue of their design and purposes, general communication activities are unpredictable when it comes to the kind of language they will generate and, thus, are less amenable to intensive focus on form than focused communication tasks.

error has occurred in the production of the form or message comprehension (cf. Ellis 2001b). Thus, as Ellis, Basturkmen and Loewen (2001b: 414) explain, "(...) reactive focus on form addresses a performance problem (which may or may not reflect a competence problem) whereas preemptive focus on form addresses an actual or perceived gap in the students' knowledge". In both cases, the impetus for a shift of attention from meaning to form can come from the teacher or a learner (i.e. an error can be corrected by the teacher, the student who committed it, or a fellow learner, and a query about a linguistic item can be both teacher- or student-initiated), it can arise in response to a problem of communication or a problem of form (i.e. there may be a communication breakdown or the participants are concerned about the quality of language produced), and the intervention can differ in terms of its complexity or directness (e.g. an inaccuracy can be responded to with a brief, implicit recast, or can trigger a longer metalingual comment).

Given the emphasis researchers currently lay on integrating attention to formal aspects of language into communicative activities, it is perhaps not surprising that the incidence, distribution, characteristics and value of incidental focus on form has been investigated in a number of descriptive studies, several of which were discussed in section 4.1.2. Although the findings of most of such investigations demonstrate quite convincingly that integrating form and meaning in message communication is feasible (e.g. Williams 1999; Ellis, Basturkmen and Loewen 2001a, 2001b; Loewen 2003; Basturkmen, Loewen and Ellis 2004), the degree of its effectiveness measured in terms of uptake has been variable. In addition, the bulk of this research has been done in second language contexts and, therefore, it would be premature to generalize its results to foreign language classrooms. In this connection, it is worth taking a look at a study investigating the feasibility of integrating form and meaning in Polish secondary schools which was carried out by the present author (Pawlak 2005b). He found that such a dual focus is viable in largely communicative stretches of classroom interaction, it can be employed to address various areas of the TL, and can lead to successful uptake. At the same time, however, he managed to identify meaning-focused activities in parts of only 6 out of the 30 classes he analyzed, which shows that the heart of the problem is not the difficulty of integrating form and meaning, but, rather, providing learners with opportunities for



genuine communication. He concludes that "(...) a dual focus on form and meaning is a powerful pedagogic tool" (2005b: 292), but hastens to add that it is neither feasible nor desirable to teach language forms entirely in this way and, on the whole, grammar lessons should revolve around preselected structures and rely on more explicit instructional sequences.

While taking timeouts from communicative activities may prove problematic to some extent and is unlikely to ever become a major way of conducting FFI in the foreign language classroom, it is not the only way in which incidental focus on form can be achieved. After all, it is a common procedure for teachers to jot down the errors students commit in the course of a whole-class discussion, a learner's presentation, or some sort of pair or group work task, and address the problematic areas once it has been completed. Being a kind of postscript to a meaning-focused activity, such *form and use feedback* typically follows *content feedback* (Harmer 2001), it can be more or less explicit, and range from a straightforward correction, through brief metalingual comments, to lengthy grammatical explanations. A similar rationale underlies what Skehan (2002) calls the *strong form of the task-based approach* which does not predetermine the grammatical structures to be targeted, and, instead, "has to incorporate pedagogic strategies to enable whatever language is needed to transact the task to then be capitalized upon" (2002: 90-91).

The principle of making salient the TL forms which learners themselves see as relevant is evident in the task-based pedagogic sequence proposed by Willis (1996). First, in the *pre-task phase*, students are introduced to the topic and task (e.g. useful words and phrases are highlighted), then they participate in a *task cycle*, the aim of which is to gradually shift their attention from fluency to accuracy (i.e. they first perform the task in groups, and then plan and present a report to the class), and, finally, they have a chance to concentrate on the linguistic items that have come up during their performance, which ensures greater relevance of such a structural focus. Obviously, irrespective of whether this type of incidental focus on form is based on the teacher's informal observation or constitutes an integral component of a task-based lesson, the learners are ultimately aware of the shift of attention from meaning to form, which is perhaps more realistic, practicable and salient than making

somewhat lame efforts to hide the targeted form in focused communication tasks.

*Guidelines on planning and implementing effective lessons and lesson sequences*

It could be erroneously inferred from what has been said up to this point that the three types of form-focused instruction represent distinct ways in which learners' attention can be directed at grammatical structures and, therefore, they are to some extent irreconcilable. In fact, this assumption is being perpetuated by researchers themselves who are sometimes so attached to the theoretical perspectives espoused that they are reluctant to modify them, tend to gloss over unfavorable research findings, or adopt the blatantly untenable position that what works in one setting will inevitably prove to be effective in another. In the opinion of the present author, however, voicing such extreme views does more harm than good and, therefore, it is much more beneficial to regard the three types of FFI as complementary.

In the first place, it is perfectly feasible to conduct a language lesson in which the focus on forms approach is combined with planned and incidental focus on form, with a particular set of techniques being brought to the fore depending on what the teacher wishes to achieve at a particular phase. For example, at the very beginning of a class devoted to the teaching of the English past progressive, learners could be asked to perform a receptive or productive focused communication task the aim of which would be to activate their knowledge of the form, meaning and use of the past simple tense and orient them to the upcoming structural focus. Although the author believes that this requirement is less significant than some researchers assume, the students could be unaware of the forms the activity is designed to elicit, in which case even the most stringent criteria would be satisfied and the task would clearly qualify as an example of planned focus on form. The next stage could involve a switch to a focus on forms, where the simple and progressive forms would be contrasted and several fill-in-the-gap and transformation activities would be performed. Subsequently, the learners could be requested to perform a text-creation activity in which they would be required to use the two tenses to come up with a short narrative on the basis of a set of pictures telling a story of a

car accident. As a follow-up, they would be instructed to work in pairs and try to decide which of the characters in their story is to blame for what happened and, then, to present their verdict to the whole class. At this stage, the teacher could easily switch to incidental focus on form by posing a few questions about linguistic items that, in his or her view, are problematic for the learners, or by providing corrective feedback on some errors, not necessarily those involving the structures previously taught. Even though the most avid supporters of deep-end CLT would in all likelihood stick to their guns, pointing out that the difference between a focus on forms and a focus on form lies in the overall approach to language and language instruction rather than the act of planning a single lesson, the present author is convinced that this example does speak to the compatibility of different types of FFI.

While the teaching sequence presented above is perfectly feasible in terms of integrating three apparently disparate instructional approaches, the issue that does remain problematic is timing, since it is perhaps wishful thinking to believe that all of these activities could ever be compressed into the 45 minutes that teachers typically have at their disposal. For this reason, as mentioned when discussing Foster's (2001) recipe for designing communicative grammar-based lessons, it probably makes sense to talk about FFI in terms of sequences consisting of several classes rather than isolated contact hours organized according to one instructional paradigm or another. In fact, if grammar teaching is ever expected to produce tangible results, and lead not only to the development of chaotic and imprecise explicit knowledge and more or less automatic command of unanalyzed exemplars, but also to long-term interlanguage restructuring and system learning, it is vitally imperative to plan a sequence of lessons where learners are supplied with opportunities to learn the rule, perform controlled and free practice activities, use the form in focused and unfocused communication tasks, repeatedly encounter it in classroom input, and occasionally revisit the structures previously taught. Given the inherent limitations of the foreign language context, such an approach appears to represent the only viable solution to the *inert knowledge problem*. Sadly, as the present author has been able to observe in numerous classrooms, few teachers seem to adhere to this fundamental principle. For example, it is not uncommon to come across situations where, say, the passive voice of various grammatical tenses is introduced in one

lesson, this is followed by some text-manipulation activities and a test, and the teacher proceeds to the next unit in the coursebook in the belief that the structure has been covered. This is definitely not the way to go about form-focused instruction.

Although the precise ways in which grammar lesson sequences should most profitably be designed hinges on a host of factors, such as the language form being focused upon, the amount of time available or the characteristics of a particular group of learners, it is possible to offer some useful guidelines in this respect. An interesting proposal has been advanced by Marton (2003) who specifies six *organizing principles*, or general strategies for teaching grammar, as well as five *executive principles* which comprise a coherent and orderly sequence of recommended techniques and procedures.<sup>12</sup> As for the general assumptions, he argues that:

- L2 grammar instruction should be deliberate and systematic;
- it must be directed at the forms, meanings and functions (uses) of particular structures;
- it should enable the use of the targeted forms in planned as opposed to unplanned (spontaneous) discourse;
- it is not supposed to respect developmental sequences;
- the learners' mother tongue should be viewed as an ally rather than a necessary evil to be avoided at all costs;
- form-focused instruction ought to consist of a logically arranged sequence of classroom procedures and activities.

The last point brings us to the issue of the executive principles. Here, Marton (2003) proposes a model that, in his view, is suitable for the Polish educational context, provides a kind of road map to grammar instruction, and can serve as a basis for teachers who wish to experiment with different techniques and procedures in their own classrooms. He argues that an effective grammar teaching sequence should comprise the following stages:

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<sup>12</sup> Marton (2003) bases his organizing and executive principles on three underlying assumptions as follows: (1) second language learning is not like first language learning, mainly because it is open to both implicit and explicit learning which can co-occur at any given time in a given individual learner, (2) language learning in the Polish educational context is best viewed as the acquisition of a complex skill, as postulated by Skill-Learning Theory, and (3) the best approach in this context is to draw upon Long's (1991) *focus on forms* first and *focus on form* later.

- 1) encouraging the noticing of the targeted structure and the establishing of form-meaning-use mappings, thus fostering the development of declarative knowledge (e.g. learners could be asked to find all the exponents of the form in a text and explain each single use);
- 2) allowing the proceduralization of declarative knowledge through various types of production practice, with the important caveat that learners should be provided with ample time to reflect on the activities they perform (e.g. putting the verbs in brackets in the correct form, translation exercises, fairly highly structured role plays, etc.);
- 3) automatizing the procedural knowledge developed in comprehension and production practice, with the main emphasis being placed on fluency, albeit not to the complete detriment of accuracy (e.g. text-based reconstructive activities, text-based role plays, etc.);
- 4) providing learners with corrective feedback at all stages of the sequence, with induced or prompted self-correction being viewed as the most beneficial form thereof;
- 5) systematically revising the grammar structures previously introduced, with the purpose of fostering system learning and sustained IL development; the techniques and procedures used with such an aim in mind can be the same as those employed in the first three stages.

Generally speaking, Marton's (2003) proposal is commendable because it is cogent, comprehensive and, most importantly, reflective of the realities of a typical foreign language context. Obviously, the model is not without its problems, especially when confronted with the theory of instructed language learning set out in the previous chapter. The principle that the present author feels specifically obliged to take issue with at this juncture is the tacit assumption that teachers should content themselves with the development and automatization of explicit knowledge, paying scant, if any, attention to fostering the kind of implicit knowledge that enables unplanned, spontaneous communication. To relate this to the foregoing discussion, the model is confined to the *focus on forms* approach and, despite what Marton appears to promise, it does not attempt to integrate it with *planned* or *incidental focus on form*, where the main emphasis would be placed on meaning and message conveyance.

Therefore, it seems necessary to complement the teaching sequence with text-creation activities which enable students to deliberately deploy the targeted structure to express their own ideas, as well as production-oriented implicit structure-based tasks which are believed to contribute to IL development and improve access to partially acquired linguistic items. Also, as has been suggested above, learners should continue to be provided with input seeded with the targeted form over a certain period of time, which can be achieved by means of comprehension-based focused communication tasks and input enrichment techniques. The spoken and written texts utilized in the context of such activities could provide further opportunities for genuine message communication during which focused corrective feedback could be utilized to respond to learners' incorrect uses of the structure. There will also come the time when students are invited to complete general communicative activities, drawing upon whatever linguistic resources are necessary for a successful outcome to be reached. In such cases, a number of previously taught structures can be made salient through incidental focus on form techniques, be they preemptive, reactive or postscript in nature.

Of pivotal importance is also the design of regular review classes, where it is customary to ask students to perform a diversity of text-manipulation activities, a practice that has been promulgated by coursebook and materials writers. While the consolidation and revision of the structures taught is indispensable, it stands to reason that the classes designed for this purpose should utilize a range of activities that can be placed at different points of what Littlewood (2004) calls the *focus on forms/focus on meaning continuum*, and produce different degrees of personal involvement. Thus, although there is still a place for controlled practice in review lessons, it appears warranted to ensure that learners have a chance to use particular linguistic features in unplanned discourse to convey meanings that they find relevant. For example, the revision of past tenses does not have to invariably consist in having students perform an array of translation and transformation exercises, as is usually the case in Polish schools. Rather, it could also involve the use of a narrative where the relevant forms are highlighted by means of different colors and font sizes, the discussion and interpretation thereof during which past tense reference errors would be consistently treated, and the application of information-gap activities which

would require learners to reconstruct a story on the basis of a set of pictures and could be regarded as a form of an implicit structure-based task. In all likelihood, such an approach would not only make the lessons more engaging and stimulating experiences, but also sensitize learners to form-meaning-function mappings, potentially fostering the growth and automatization of implicit knowledge. Similar procedures can be employed when a given structure is being revisited as a prelude to familiarizing students with another meaning or use thereof as part of a cyclical syllabus. They also appear to be invaluable in remedial teaching where helping learners use particular features more accurately and less variably is at stake.

Reasonable as the approach outlined above undoubtedly is, we run up once more against the problem of time constraints. After all, it could be argued, and quite rightly so, that such a systematic treatment of a single linguistic item is unfeasible in situations where instruction is confined to just a few hours a week, the mastery of grammatical structures is but one of the goals to be attained, and, in many cases, it is not at the top of the teaching agenda. Such reservations being salutary, the problem is less intractable than it might appear at first glance, and, in fact, it is the firm belief of the present author that following the guidelines spelled out in the preceding paragraphs can help teachers not only make FFI more effective but also economize on valuable classroom time. This is because setting up tasks that require students to employ the targeted feature in communication provides an excellent point of departure for developing the remaining language subsystems and applying the four skills.

If, for instance, a lesson is designed around focused communication tasks, logically, the aim will be not only to help learners gain greater control of a particular structure, but also to practice reading and listening when they familiarize themselves with the stimulus material, as well as speaking and writing as they set about transacting the task. Likewise, there is no reason why the spoken or written texts utilized in such lessons should not be followed by listening or reading comprehension tasks, or be selected in such a way as to enable a lexical, phonological or functional focus. Moreover, with time, the preoccupation with a particular feature would be gradually diminished, with materials, tasks and activities illustrating or encouraging its use constituting just a short segment of a lesson. Ultimately, such a focus would become entirely incidental, with the

structure being just one among many candidates for preemptive and reactive interventions in unfocused communication tasks. Besides, at present, teachers tend to allocate so much time to controlled practice activities and so little to tasks that would enable students to develop communicative ability that any pedagogic proposal permitting the combination of the two seemingly irreconcilable goals is worth pursuing, even if it entails omitting several exercises or activities included in the coursebook.

To use the terms commonly employed in the relevant SLA publications (e.g. Ellis 2006), what is being proposed here, then, is that FFI directed at a specific feature should initially be *massed* and *intensive*, and, in the course of time, gradually become more *distributed* and *extensive*. This means that once, say, the second conditional, is introduced for the first time, a series of successive lessons should be devoted to the structure, with each of them affording learners multiple encounters with it. Later, however, the feature would be dealt with more incidentally and opportunistically, which does not exclude the possibility that it could become the focus of attention at some other time.

Clearly, the precise manner in which grammar-based lessons and lesson sequences are planned is likely to be the function of the inherent properties of the form being taught, the characteristics of the local instructional setting as well as the learners' needs, preferences and proficiency level. Also, as was emphasized in the discussion of the microoptions in FFI, the techniques and procedures selected have to be carefully matched to the goals the teacher wishes to achieve in a particular lesson. Besides, not all of them are likely to be equally effective in foreign language contexts, which means that practitioners will have to verify their true utility in their own classrooms. Finally, it does not take exceptional insight to predict that many teachers will stick to the old ways irrespective of how sound the recommendations offered by researchers might be, and, thus, it is a safe bet to assume that the majority of decisions concerning the planning and sequencing of grammar-based lessons will be dictated by the coursebook or the teacher's manual. Nonetheless, there is always the hope that once teachers become cognizant of the availability of alternative proposals, at least some of them will pause to reflect on their current practices, try out the different instructional microoptions and lesson designs, and,



ultimately, make them an integral component of their individual approach to form-focused instruction.

#### 4.2.2. The place of form-focused instruction in the curriculum

An issue that is inextricably connected with planning and implementing grammar-based lessons and lesson sequences is the place that FFI is accorded in a specific foreign language curriculum. More specifically, of great importance is the predominant syllabus type that determines the teaching content and the sequencing of this content in a given period of time, and may also contain statements about the aims and objectives to be attained, methodology or preferred forms of evaluation (cf. Breen 2001; Johnson 2001). Many types of syllabuses have been proposed and competing classifications thereof have been devised. Breen (2001), for example, distinguishes four syllabus types which, in his view, are in use in language teaching nowadays, and these include formal, functional, task-based and process syllabuses. Nunan (2001) offers a similar division, differentiating between grammatical, notional-functional and task-based syllabuses, but extends it to include content-based or integrated syllabuses, and does not even mention the process syllabus. The most pertinent to the discussion of macrooptions in FFI, however, appears to be Wilkins's (1976) seminal distinction between *synthetic* and *analytic syllabuses* mentioned briefly in Chapter One, or what Long and Crookes (1992: 27) label *Type A* and *Type B syllabuses*. They explain the distinction as follows:<sup>13</sup>

*Type A* syllabuses focus on *what* is to be learned: the L2. They are interventionist. Someone preselects and predigests the language to be taught, dividing it up into small pieces, and determining learning objectives in advance of any consideration of who the learners may be or of how languages are learned. *Type A* syllabuses (...) are thus external to the learner (...) *Type B* syllabuses, on the other hand,

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<sup>13</sup> In fact, Long and Crookes (1992) view the distinction between *Type A* and *Type B* syllabuses, originally proposed by R. V. White (1988), as distinct from the differentiation between *synthetic* and *analytic* syllabuses on the grounds that the former is broader and captures not only the way in which input and learner interact, but also course design, instruction, language learning and evaluation. While such a distinction may be justifiable, it appears to be irrelevant for the purposes of the present chapter.

focus on *how* the language is to be learned. They are non-interventionist. They involve no artificial preselection or arrangement of items and allow objectives to be determined by a process of negotiation between teachers and learners after they meet, as a course evolves. They are thus internal to the learner [emphases original].

As for specific exponents of the two categories, structural, notional-functional and situational syllabuses are all manifestations of synthetic or Type A syllabuses since all of them are based on linguistic units of some sort. By contrast, different kinds of task-based syllabuses, namely the procedural, process and task-based learning (TBL) syllabus, are primarily analytic or Type B in nature, in the sense that they specify learning content in non-linguistic terms and encourage learner involvement in setting the aims and objectives. Since the place of form-focused instruction in the foreign language curriculum currently revolves around the relative contributions of the *structural* and *TBL syllabuses*, as well as the ways in which they can best be integrated, it is such issues that will be the main focus of the present section.

### *Structural syllabuses*

It is probably fair to say that despite the inroads made by task-based learning in some quarters, a *structural syllabus*, sometimes also referred to as a *grammatical*, *linguistic* or *formal syllabus*, still remains the most common basis for the selection and organization of the content of language courses, particularly in foreign language contexts such as our own. Although there are many factors which have contributed to its continued popularity and have shielded it from the numerous criticisms it has attracted from SLA theorists and researchers, the major one appears to be the fact that grammar continues to be the main unit of organization in most coursebooks, albeit often under the guise of themes, functions or situations. As Ellis (1997: 135) explains, "a structural syllabus consists of a list of grammatical items, usually arranged in the order in which they are taught". Obviously, the order in which the structures appear is not random and takes into account a host of factors such as simplicity, regularity, grouping, frequency, utility, L1-L2 similarity or teachability (Mackey 1976; Johnson 2001), all of which are intended to ensure that students learn what they are taught, but are typically based on

rational rather than psycholinguistic or empirical criteria (see section 4.2.3. below).

Even though structural syllabuses have provided a basis for teaching only explicit knowledge, as in the Grammar Translation Method, or only implicit knowledge, as evidenced by audiolingual approaches, both of these goals are usually pursued in current teaching practice, even if not all teachers happen to be aware of this fact. As posited by the theory of instructed language learning presented in Chapter Three, the development of explicit representation of TL rules is relatively unproblematic since such knowledge is unlikely to be subject to developmental constraints and the potential learning difficulty only accrues from the inherent characteristics of the form itself rather than the operation of the orders and sequences of acquisition. As regards the development of the kind of intuitive knowledge that underpins communicative ability, whether or not the problem of the learner's *built-in syllabus* (Corder 1967) can be sidestepped mainly hinges upon whether FFI is expected to result in the comprehension or production of linguistic features. Both Pienemann's (1985) differentiation between *input for comprehension* and *input for production* and some research findings (e.g. Buczowska and Weist 1991) show that developmental stages are not evident when acquisition is understood in terms of learners' comprehension, and, thus, there is no reason why structural syllabuses should not be employed as a tool for input enhancement and intake facilitation.

However, in most cases, such syllabuses are used with the purpose of teaching students how to deploy language forms in communication, and, here, it is customary to distinguish between the view of instruction as leading to *immediate mastery* or *gradual mastery* of the features being taught (cf. Ellis 1997). The former position is based on the assumption that L2 acquisition is a process of accumulating entities (Rutherford 1987) in which one item can be fully mastered before another is introduced, and, thus, instruction can largely proceed in a *linear fashion*. As has been made clear in different parts of this work, such an approach is untenable for a number of reasons, the most important of which are the incompatibility of the teacher-imposed, *external syllabus* and learner *internal syllabus*, the lack of correspondence between the items included in the syllabus and the mental categories constructed by learners (Bley-Vroman 1983), or the interrelatedness of the rules in the IL (McLaughlin 1990b). An attempt to ameliorate such prob-

lems can be found in the *gradual mastery view of learning*, according to which the growth of the TL system is bound to be lengthy, with the acquisition of particular structures occurring in fits and starts, and being only partial and incomplete. This led some methodologists to come up with the idea of a *spiral* or *cyclical syllabus*, which involves directing learners' attention to grammatical features on several occasions, each time from a somewhat different angle (e.g. by introducing another meaning or use), in the hope of replicating the natural processes of acquisition and catering to the development of implicit knowledge. Although this approach is more viable than the one emphasizing immediately correct production, there is still the problem of ensuring that a particular item is introduced when the learner has reached the requisite developmental stage, which is bound to be a futile effort. As Ellis (1997: 139) comments, "A spiral syllabus may increase the likelihood of this occurring, but it is still a hit-or-miss affair". It is such problems that have prompted some communicatively-oriented researchers to advocate complete rejection of structural syllabuses.

### *Task-based syllabuses*

The recognition that it is not feasible to determine in advance the linguistic content that learners are ready to acquire at a specific time lies at the heart of the proposal that it is analytic or Type B syllabuses that should serve as a basis for planning language courses since they "present language in naturalistic units which then have to be operated upon, and broken down by the learner, with acquisitional processes then engaging with the input that has been received" (Skehan 1998: 97). Hence the recommendation that instruction should be organized in terms of tasks that learners have to transact rather than predetermined linguistic features, as not only is this approach more compatible with how languages are acquired, but also emphasizes learner engagement and enables teachers to respond to individual needs (cf. Ellis 2003).

An early implementation of the principles of *task-based instruction* can be found in Prabhu's (1987) *procedural syllabus* which excludes explicit pedagogic intervention in the form of grammar teaching and error correction (see Chapter Two, section 2.4.4.). However, in the face of the shortcomings of entirely acquisition-based approaches, the emergence of new theoretical positions and

the research findings demonstrating the effectiveness of FFI, applied linguists soon came to the conclusion that attention to language forms should be an integral component of TBI. As a consequence, their major concern has been exploring the ways in which students can be encouraged to attend to TL features without compromising the primary focus on meaning. As shown in the previous section, this can be achieved through providing incidental focus on form (Long 1991), manipulating task design to ensure a variable focus on fluency, accuracy or complexity (Skehan 1998), setting up productive and receptive focused communication tasks (Ellis 2003), intervening directly in task performance (Samuda 2001), or incorporating more or less explicit language focus activities into the pre-task or post-task stages (Willis 1996). Since some features are unlikely to arise naturally in classroom interaction, even when it is based on communicative tasks and content areas, Larsen-Freeman (2003) proposes that teachers should create a *grammar checklist* to which they can refer to see what items have not yet emerged and try to *fill in the gap in the input* (Lightbown 1998).

Regardless of the steps taken to ensure that learners have the opportunity to attend to all the necessary language forms in the course of task-based instruction, attaining this goal poses a major challenge that is seldom satisfactorily met, with the effect that TL grammar is not systematically and comprehensively covered (Ellis 2002a). The rationale for TBL can also be questioned on a number of other counts, not least of which is the fact that, as demonstrated in Chapter Three, instruction directed at preselected features does lead to significant gains, even in unplanned discourse, and its effects are largely durable. In addition, researchers such as Sheen (1994), Seedhouse (1999) or Swan (2005) have pointed out that there is no tangible empirical evidence which would indicate that task-based instruction is superior to teaching based on the structural syllabus and the PPP paradigm. Concerns have also been voiced with regard to the applicability of task-based approaches to young learners and lower proficiency levels (Bruton 2002). Finally, taking into account the diversity of classifications of tasks (e.g. pedagogic, rhetorical, cognitive, psycholinguistic), the range of topics they can involve, as well as the difficulty in formulating the criteria according to which they can be graded (e.g. task complexity, difficulty, procedures, etc.), it is hard to see how they could ever provide a basis for entire curriculum-driven and outcome-oriented foreign language courses in

Polish schools (see Ellis 2003 for discussion of issues involved in classifying and sequencing tasks).

### *Towards integrating form and meaning in the curriculum*

In the light of the fact that both structural and task-based syllabuses are not without their problems when used in isolation, it appears necessary to integrate the message-centered and code-focused components in the overall foreign language curriculum. One possibility is to embrace the *integrated option*, where *planned* or *incidental focus on form* is injected into content-based lessons, but, as indicated in section 4.2.1., the former does not ensure that the learners will actually deploy the targeted forms and the latter cannot possibly work in the case of features that are rare in classroom discourse. Equally important is the fact that although such approaches can be used in isolated lessons or incorporated into teaching sequences, they would not be adequate as a sole basis for language instruction in Poland for reasons spelled out earlier in this chapter. Thus, it is more reasonable to adopt the *parallel* or *modular option* where "no attempt is made to integrate content and form. Instead, the syllabus is conceived of as two entirely separate modules – a communicative module and a code-based module (Ellis 2003: 236). Such an approach, however, is subject to various interpretations and can be implemented in quite disparate ways.

Ellis (2002a, 2003), for example, believes that the main component should consist of largely receptive and productive unfocused communicative tasks allowing learners to use the TL to convey genuine meanings and messages. As for the code-focused module, it would be smaller, entirely separate from the message-centered element, and largely remedial in nature, comprising a checklist of linguistic items that learners find particularly problematic. In his earlier writings, Ellis (1997, 2002a) suggests that, due to the existence of developmental constraints, "the goal of the code-oriented component should be awareness rather than performance" (2002a: 26), understood as the development of explicit knowledge or, at best, comprehension-based implicit knowledge promoted through the application of consciousness-raising or interpretation tasks. More recently, however, he has acknowledged that the PPP paradigm or implicit structure-based production tasks can also be used for that purpose, commenting that "Teachers would make their

own decisions about when to call on the tasks in the code-based module" (2003: 236). However, by far the most controversial proposal concerns the staging of the message-focused and code-oriented components. Drawing upon claims that, similarly to L1 learning, early stages of L2 acquisition are lexical in nature, he argues that students at elementary levels should only be required to perform communicative tasks, with the code-focused component only being introduced "from the intermediate stage onwards, gradually assuming more of the total teaching time" (Ellis 2003: 237). In effect, then, he proposes that form-focused instruction is not a viable option in teaching beginners.

Even though Ellis's modular approach is cogent, it accords with the *lexicalization to syntacticalization view of acquisition* (see Chapter Three, section 3.3.8.) and it could perhaps be applicable to situations in which students have opportunities for abundant naturalistic exposure, it is unlikely to serve as a basis for language instruction in Polish schools, or in similar foreign language contexts. For one thing, the three or four lessons a week that learners receive in school are, for many of them, the main, or, in the case of students from small towns or villages, often the only form of access to the TL. Thus, it would be rather ingenuous to believe that they are capable of picking up much of the language naturally, even if we assume that the early stages of acquisition are characterized by item learning of words and chunks rather than system learning of patterns and regularities. Another difficulty is that completely eschewing a focus on language forms at the beginning of the course would inevitably lead to the development of fluency at the expense of accuracy and complexity, or the emergence of classroom pidgins similar to those identified in immersion programs, problems that would be difficult, if not impossible, to eradicate at later stages. Besides, since some learners never actually move beyond the preintermediate stage, or the B1 level of the *Common European Framework*, they would never get the chance to become familiarized with TL grammar if Ellis's (2002a, 2003) model were to be uncritically adopted.

Therefore, the present author believes that the code-focused component should be present from the very outset since, as he pointed out elsewhere, "lower-level students need some tangible signposts of their progress and clear-cut goals, and it is the structural syllabus rather than a task-based one that is better suited to provide these" (Pawlak 2005c: 48). This does not mean, of course, that

communicative tasks should not be used with beginners or that some lessons cannot be planned around them, but, rather, that this kind of instruction should supplement rather than replace Type A syllabuses and the associated methodological procedures. As for intermediate or advanced learners, the message-centered, task-based component could gradually come to the fore, but even in this case, the choice of the methodological microoptions or macrooptions should not be at odds with teachers' and students' deeply-ingrained beliefs, and it should take into consideration the existing external requirements. All of these concerns are superbly rendered by Swan (2005: 397) who writes: "The naturalistic communication-driven pedagogy characteristic of TBI has serious limitations, especially as regards the systematic teaching of new linguistic material. Its exclusive use is particularly unsuitable for exposure-poor contexts where time is limited – that is to say – for most of the world's language learners".

Reluctant as teachers might be to admit it, it is common knowledge that the bulk of foreign language instruction in Polish schools continues to center around grammatical structures, with students being provided with rather scant opportunities for meaning and message conveyance. Although the situation is slowly changing for the better as a result of the sweeping changes that have either already been instituted or are still in the process of being introduced into the existing curricula and examination requirements, the task of overhauling the current teaching practice is bound to be a long and arduous one. Thus, it is rather uncontroversial that the need to integrate the meaning-focused and code-oriented components should be emphasized at every step, but, in the opinion of the present author, this integration cannot follow the modular approach proposed by Ellis (2002a, 2003). In fact, it seems more warranted to draw upon earlier proposals of how structural and communicative elements can be combined in the curriculum. One such scheme is Yalden's (1983) *proportional syllabus*, where both the structural and functional component are present, but the weight given to each changes as the course progresses, with the former being predominant at the early stages and the latter gradually expanding as the students become more and more proficient.

By the same token, given all the limitations of the foreign language context, it appears necessary to initially base instruction on a structural syllabus which, however, should cater to the develop-



ment of both explicit and implicit knowledge, and be complemented with a communication-oriented functional or task-based component. After all, such a systematic, cyclical coverage of structures would not be more hit-or-miss than having students transact tasks and hoping that language learning will take care of itself. Obviously, the code-focused component should also contain lexical and phonological features, and instruction should be conducted in such a way that a balanced development of language skills and their integration is ensured. Such an approach would also be to a large extent *parallel* or *modular*, but, contrary to Ellis's (2003) proposal, it would not only allow but, in fact, actively encourage forging links between the code-focused and message-focused components, which is reflective of the solutions typically adopted by coursebook writers.

In the course of time, as learners reach the intermediate or upper-intermediate levels, or roughly B2 and C1 in terms of the common reference levels, the focus on communicative ability would gain prominence. This is because, by this stage, students will have already developed conscious knowledge of the most important grammatical structures and will have partly incorporated at least some of them into their interlanguages, with the effect that the main goal would be to ensure that they manage to use these forms accurately and consistently in unplanned discourse. In fact, in the case of learners at higher levels of proficiency, it is even possible to envisage an ultimate transition to the *integrated approach*, where teachers could opt for some version of TBI and draw learners' attention to forms that still turn out to be problematic by means of planned and incidental focus on form, or, where necessary, isolated focus on forms classes (cf. Pawlak 2005c). Obviously, as is the case with designing language lessons and lesson sequences, the applicability of such solutions is likely to be constrained by the prescribed goal-oriented curricula as well as the coursebooks selected, but, as Larsen-Freeman wisely points out, "even in such a situation, it may be possible for teachers not to follow a sequence rigidly" (2001a: 263).

#### 4.2.3. Selecting language forms to be taught

Irrespective of whether instruction in a particular language program follows a structural syllabus or takes the form of task-based learning, as understood by Skehan (1998), Samuda (2001) or Ellis (2003), a

crucial question arises as to what grammatical structures should be targeted by pedagogic intervention. This has always been a highly controversial issue, with researchers such as Krashen (1982) adopting a minimalist position and arguing that grammar teaching should be confined to a few simple and portable rules (e.g. third person '-s') as a basis for successful monitoring, and most course-book writers and authors of grammar practice materials (e.g. Murphy 1998) embracing a comprehensive view, according to which learners should be familiarized with a wide range of grammatical structures (cf. Ellis 2006). While the former is clearly untenable in view of all the empirical evidence for the facilitative effects of FFI, the latter is unacceptable to SLA theorists and researchers as it is incompatible with the natural processes of acquisition, but, it should be emphasized, it is still in vogue in the vast majority of foreign language contexts. Obviously, teachers' preferences are unlikely to change until materials writers start taking account of research findings, which, in turn, can only happen when these findings become less patchy and inconclusive, and, at the same time, more relevant to practitioners' concerns, thus providing a sound basis for pedagogical proposals. Still, it is warranted to explore the factors that should be considered when choosing the forms to be taught since, ultimately, it is the classroom teacher who has the power to decide whether to introduce a point of grammar which appears in a given unit immediately or at a later time, what language features require additional practice, or which inaccuracies in learners' output to address in meaning-focused activities.

A relatively neutral and sensible approach is to concentrate on linguistic features that are problematic for a particular group of learners, which is remedial in nature and "(...) has high face validity, in that teachers are closely connected to instructional decisions" (Doughty and Williams 1998c: 212). Valuable as it is, however, the main shortcoming of this solution is that, although many developmental errors are indeed universal (e.g. the double comparative, omission of third person '-s' or overgeneralization of the past tense marker '-ed'), many other potential problems are not so easily predictable. Thus, a more reliable approach would seem to be establishing a set of criteria concerning the inherent learning difficulty of grammatical structures, but, as amply demonstrated in the relevant SLA literature (e.g. Ellis 1997; Doughty and Williams 1998c; DeKeyser 1998; 2003; Ellis 2006), this is bound to be a

daunting task. The difficulty of defining learning difficulty has recently been recognized by DeKeyser who comments that "Even a cursory look at some well-known discussions of what is difficult in L2 acquisition shows how tricky the concept is" (2005: 2), and argues that the learnability of a grammatical structure is a function of three factors, namely: complexity of form, complexity of meaning and complexity of the form-meaning relationship. While these factors undoubtedly play a part, their impact is likely to vary depending on whether the notion of learning difficulty is defined in terms of explicit or implicit knowledge, since, as is the case with third person '-s', learners may easily grasp its form, meaning and the relationship between the two, but fail to internalize it and successfully deploy it in communication. Therefore, it seems justified to explore the variables that account for the difficulty of developing explicit and implicit representation of grammatical structures in more detail.

Irrespective of the choice of the grammatical structures to be targeted by instruction, the criteria for determining their difficulty in terms of explicit knowledge are by and large akin to those used in grading the linguistic items in structural syllabuses. Since, as was demonstrated in Chapter Three, explicit knowledge is declarative in nature, it is comprised of facts about the L2, and, thus, no different from encyclopedic knowledge of any other kind (Ellis 2004b), it is possible to sequence grammatical structures according to the cognitive demands placed on the learner. To quote Ellis (2003: 233) once again, "Just as one can develop general criteria to determine the order in which to teach mathematical theorems, so one can establish criteria for grading grammatical rules as declarative knowledge – some rules will be easier to *understand* [emphasis original] than others".

One possible set of such factors can be found in Table 4.1., where the inherent difficulty of a particular feature is related to its *formal* and *functional complexity*, *reliability*, *scope*, the need to use *technical terminology* in explaining it, and the degree of its *similarity to the learners' L1*. Thus, for example, the English past simple tense should be relatively simple for Polish learners to master in terms of explicit knowledge since, once they have figured out the regular-irregular distinction and memorized the most common irregular forms, it is

Criteria	Definition	Example
1. Formal complexity	The extent to which the structure involves just a single or many elements.	Plural '-s' is formally simple; relative clauses involve many elements.
2. Functional complexity	The extent to which the meanings realized by a structure are transparent.	Plural '-s' is transparent; articles are opaque.
3. Reliability	The extent to which the rule has exceptions.	Third person '-s' is very reliable; the rule for periphrastic genitives has many exceptions.
4. Scope	The extent to which a rule has a broad or narrow coverage.	The present simple tense has broad scope; the future perfect tense has narrow scope.
5. Metalinguage	The extent to which the rule can be provided simply with minimum metalinguage.	Plural '-s' is simple; reflexive pronouns are more difficult; subject-verb inversion is even more difficult.
6. L1/L2 contrast	A feature that corresponds to an L1 feature is easier than a feature that does not.	For French learners of English, the position of adverbs in sentences is difficult.

*Table 4.1. Criteria for determining the difficulty of grammatical structures as explicit knowledge (adapted from Ellis 2002a: 28).*

formally and functionally simple, reliable and narrow in scope, it does not necessitate the use of metalinguage, and has a clear counterpart in their mother tongue. By contrast, the English present perfect tense is bound to represent a considerable learning challenge in view of the fact that it is extremely complex in terms of its form and function, it does not have a Polish equivalent, the reliability of its use is limited, and, more often than not, its introduction involves the use of grammatical terminology. Obviously, this is not the only set of criteria that can be drawn upon in establishing the difficulty of items in a structural syllabus and numerous other proposals have been advanced (e.g. Mackey 1976; Johnson 2001). One such additional variable is the utility of a particular form, which, for example, provides a justification for teaching the imperative very early in the course, but this has perhaps more to do with the use of the structure rather than its inherent difficulty.

The reason why the forms that can be easily learned consciously are so difficult to integrate into the interlanguage can obviously be related to the existence of the orders and sequences of acquisition, which Pienemann (1998) explains in terms of increasing processing complexity and capacity, as measured by the amount of manipulation of elements and the demands imposed on short-term memory, respectively (see Chapter Three, section 3.3.2.). Consequently, only *variational* features can be directly incorporated into implicit knowledge whereas *developmental* ones can only be acquired when learners have reached the requisite IL stage. However, although this proposal is of pivotal importance for SLA theory and research, its applicability to real classrooms is limited due to the wide range of learner abilities and the virtual impossibility of determining the students' place on the IL continuum.

A much more tangible and perhaps also controllable variable is the *salience* of particular grammatical structures, which refers to the ease with which they are noticed, which is itself dependent on a few factors (Ellis 1997; Doughty and Williams 1998c). It has been suggested, for example, that whether or not learners succeed in attending to specific language forms may be a function of their frequency in the input, an explanation that has been provided for the earlier acquisition of preposition stranding (e.g. 'He's the one who I came with') in comparison with the pied-piped construction (e.g. 'He's the one with whom I came') (Bardovi-Harlig 1987).<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, frequency must surely interact with other factors in accounting for salience, as is evident in the fact that although the incidence of such features as the English articles or third person '-s' is very high in the input, they do pose a great challenge when it comes to the development of implicit knowledge. In these cases, the lack of salience and the difficulty of noticing the forms, which is believed to be a prerequisite to acquisition (Skehan 1998; Schmidt 2001), can be related to their *semantic redundancy*, or the fact that they do not contribute any meaning to the message in which they occur, and their omission does not result in a communication breakdown (cf. Ellis 1997; Harley 1998). It could be hypothesized, then, that it is features that are infrequent in the classroom input or that have little communicative value that should be targeted by instruction.

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<sup>14</sup> This finding can also be accounted for in terms of markedness, a point to which we return later.

In addition to salience, successful internalization of a structure may also hinge upon the distinction between *resilient* and *fragile features* (Goldin-Meadow 1982). While the former include many syntactic features (e.g. word order), can be found in different languages and have been shown to be acquired naturally from classroom input, the latter encompass various aspects of morphology (e.g. noun and verb inflections) and are typically more difficult to acquire. This being the case, logic would dictate that it is fragile language properties that should be prime candidates for pedagogic intervention (cf. Ellis 1997). Yet another factor which deserves consideration is *markedness*, which has been defined in various ways, but, for the purpose of the present section, it is understood as the extent to which a particular language form is infrequent, unnatural or deviant from a regular pattern (cf. Richards, Platt and Weber 1985). As indicated by the findings of *projection studies* (see Chapter Three, section 3.2.3.), it might make sense to direct FFI at marked features since the knowledge of such seemingly harder-to-learn structures may enable learners to acquire implicationally related unmarked features (e.g. relative clauses). Finally, as was the case with explicit knowledge, successful integration of a structure into the implicit knowledge store may depend on the degree of its congruence with L1 forms, but, here, the situation is much more complex than was assumed when Contrastive Analysis was in its heyday. To give one example, when adverb placement rules are different in L1 and L2, as is the case with French and English, they may be difficult to acquire (e.g. White 1991; Trahey and White 1993), but this is often not the case with word order, as is evident in Japanese learners of English (Ellis 1997).

### 4.3. Testing grammatical knowledge

Having thoroughly discussed the diverse microoptions and macrooptions in teaching formal aspects of language, it appears fitting to close this chapter with a comment on how TL grammatical ability should be assessed in order to provide us with valid and reliable measures of the effectiveness of FFI. Just as the selection of particular instructional options can be motivated by the teacher's desire to contribute to the development of explicit or implicit knowledge, or perhaps some kind of amalgam of the two, so the

choice of specific testing techniques provides us with valuable information about whether a grammar structure has been successfully incorporated into the two types of representation and the ease with which it can be accessed. Thus, when teachers utilize discrete-point tests where, for example, learners are required to answer multiple-choice questions, complete translations or fill out the gaps with the help of one or more grammatical forms, they can only hope to infer from the results whether these forms have been mastered declaratively and are available for use in controlled processing. However, as Purpura points out and as many teachers would undoubtedly attest, "this type of assessment would not necessarily show that the students had actually internalized the grammatical forms so as to be able to use them automatically in spontaneous or unplanned discourse" (2004: 45). In fact, if the information about the learners' implicit knowledge were to be obtained, it would be necessary to devise tasks which would require them to produce and comprehend the linguistic features in real-time communication, perhaps even under time pressure (Ellis 2001c). Quite obviously, the best candidates for eliciting data of this kind would be *oral-performance tests* (Thornbury 2001b), which would comprise different types of measurements involving *free-constructed responses* (Norris and Ortega 2000), or, to put it more simply, various communicative tasks.

Although an exhaustive coverage of all the issues involved in designing valid, reliable and practical tests of grammatical ability as well as their administration and scoring is beyond the scope of the present work, it does make sense at this point to provide a brief overview of the techniques teachers have at their disposal and to explore their relevance in the Polish educational context. Since most available classifications of grammar test tasks are somewhat dated and one-sided (e.g. Hughes 1989), and, what might seem odd given the importance attached to FFI in many school systems, some recent publications on language assessment do not even include a separate chapter devoted to this subsystem (e.g. Brown 2003), in the present discussion we will draw upon a comprehensive and up-to-date taxonomy proposed by Purpura (2004) who distinguishes between:

- *Selected-response tasks*

Such tasks are designed to assess recognition or recall of grammatical knowledge, and include multiple-choice, match-

ing, true/false, discrimination, grammaticality judgment and noticing (consciousness-raising) activities, where the input can be language, non-language or both, and it can vary in length (e.g. single sentences in multiple-choice activities vs. identification of different meanings of a form in a noticing task). Students are typically given a credit when the response is correct and no credit when it is wrong, although it is possible to envisage partial credit scoring in some cases.

- *Limited-response tasks*

Examples of limited production items include gap-filling, cloze, short-answer, information-transfer and information-gap, dictation as well as dialog or discourse-completion activities. While the types of input and its length may be the same as in selected-response items, such tasks "elicit a response embodying a limited amount of language production (...) [and] are intended to assess one or more areas of grammatical knowledge depending on construct definition" (2004: 134). Although teachers can choose to utilize multiple criteria for correctness (e.g. form and meaning) and opt for holistic or analytic rating, it is perhaps more customary to conflate the different dimensions and mark the responses as right or wrong.

- *Extended-production tasks*

Such tasks "present input in the form of a prompt instead of an item" and this input "can involve language/non-language information and can vary considerably in length" (Purpura 2004: 139). These can be written tasks such as essays, narratives or summaries as well as oral tasks that Littlewood (2004) would classify as *structured communication* (e.g. role-play) or *authentic communication* (e.g. discussion) activities. Irrespective of the medium and their specific design features, the purpose of such tasks is to gauge learners' ability to use grammatical structures to convey meanings in instances of language use, both in terms of implicit knowledge, when real-time performance is elicited, and explicit knowledge, when ample planning time is given. Extended production tasks are usually scored with the help of rating scales in which different components of grammatical ability (e.g. accuracy, appropriacy, range of structures used, etc.) are evaluated. As Ellis (2005a) explains, it is also possible to



assess students' performance on communicative activities using discourse analytic measures (e.g. looking at linguistic devices used to take the floor) or tangible task outcomes (e.g. the number of differences between two pictures discovered).

Apart from the three major categories of test types, classroom-based assessment of grammar could also be more *informal* and *indirect*. This is the case, for example, when teachers infer the mastery of the past tense on the basis of students' responses to a series of questions, or keep anecdotal records consisting of notes on aspects of learner performance (O'Malley and Valdez-Pierce 1996). It is also possible to encourage self- and peer-assessment through the use of alternative methods of evaluation, such as student journals, learning logs, or the *Language Biography* and *Dossier* sections of the *European Language Portfolio* (e.g. Bartczak et al. 2005; cf. Komorowska 2002; Brown 2003; Purpura 2004; Pawlak 2005d).

To quote Purpura (2004: 252), "(...) for the past fifty years, grammatical ability has been defined in many instances as morphosyntactic form and tested in either a discrete-point, selected-response format (...) or in a discrete-point, limited-production format, typically by means of the cloze or some other gap-filling task". Not surprisingly, the testing of language forms in the Polish educational context is no different, which can be ascribed to long-standing traditions and tenacious teachers' beliefs, the kind of training that prospective and in-service teachers receive, as well as the discrete-item approach advocated in modern coursebooks. At the other pole are the revamped final exams at the end of senior high school which are mainly designed to assess target language skills, with grammar not being measured separately and constituting just one variable in the broadly-defined 'language abilities' category. In effect, fluency is prioritized over accuracy, which, beyond doubt, dissuades teachers from attempting to include measures of learners' implicit knowledge of language forms in regular classroom practice. Both of these positions are unsatisfactory, since, on the one hand, the command of the formal aspects of the TL may well be regarded as indispensable, while, on the other, the emphasis should be placed both on the development of explicit and implicit knowledge of grammar structures, concerning in equal measure their forms, meanings and uses.

Although, admittedly, the prospects for a more balanced approach are rather bleak as long as leading publishers do not include relevant tasks and guidelines in coursebooks and teachers' manuals, and educational authorities do not initiate suitable changes in examination requirements, it is still possible to advance some recommendations that can be easily incorporated into current practice. For one thing, time-consuming as it might be, teachers should occasionally set up communicative tasks which could be tape-recorded and serve as a basis for evaluating students' ability to deploy the forms introduced in relatively spontaneous and unplanned discourse. While this proposal places additional demands on practitioners and might not meet with enthusiasm, other suggestions are more modest and perhaps more palatable. For example, even tests which only tap learners' explicit knowledge could go beyond assessing the usage of particular forms in specific linguistic contexts and include items that would provide teachers with information about the extent to which students have been able to grasp their meanings and functions. Also, when scoring limited-response tasks, it is a good idea to reward not only complete accuracy but also to give credit to interlanguage development (Ellis 2001c). For example, when students are supposed to use the past tense in a sentence, their responses should not just be judged as right or wrong, and partial credit should be given for forms which show that the natural processes of acquisition are under way (e.g. 'He goed to bed'). There are reasons to assume that when such advice is accepted, tests of grammatical knowledge will not only provide a basis for assessing students' progress, but also become an important diagnostic tool that can be used to evaluate the effectiveness of our teaching and, ultimately, lead to enhancing the overall quality of form-focused instruction.

## Conclusion

The discussion in the present chapter has centered around the tools that teachers have at their disposal when providing FFI, both when it comes to instructional microoptions, defined as the concrete techniques and procedures, and higher-level macrooptions, understood as planning and curricular decisions. Given the proliferation of pedagogical proposals and empirical investigations undertaken to

determine their value, it should hardly come as a surprise that the most space has been taken up by the first section which offered a comprehensive and up-to-date taxonomy of the microoptions in FFI. Apart from exploring the ways in which such techniques and procedures can be designed and implemented as well as discussing the results of pertinent studies, an attempt was also made to assess their utility in terms of learner factors. Subsequently, the focus of attention was shifted to methodological macrooptions, with the main emphasis being placed on providing an account of choices in implementing separate grammar-based lessons and their sequences, reconciling the code-focused and message-oriented modules in the curriculum, identifying the forms to be taught, as well as offering tentative recommendations in such areas. Finally, the possible ways of assessing learners' grammatical ability were discussed and the need to rely for that purpose on measures of both controlled and free production was underscored. Throughout the chapter efforts have also been made to appraise the diverse pedagogical proposals against the backdrop of the realities of a foreign language context, such as the one found in Poland, and its inherent limitations.

The main insight that emerges from the foregoing discussion appears to be that several instructional options the effectiveness of which has been empirically confirmed are grossly underrepresented in modern textbooks and largely absent from current teaching practice in Polish schools. This is evident, for example, in the limited importance attached to focused communication tasks, consciousness-raising activities, or corrective feedback provided in the course of meaningful interaction. As a result, in many cases, students are not only incapable of overcoming the inert knowledge problem, so ubiquitous in situations where exposure is scarce, but, which is truly incomprehensible, they are also stripped of opportunities to develop and proceduralize the explicit representation of grammar rules in most effective ways. Similar problems are visible in lesson planning and implementation, with coursebooks still adhering to the PPP model and many teachers either following suit or, in fact, failing to ensure that the production phase of the sequence is present and sufficiently emphasized. The same comments apply to the design of language curricula, which continue to be based on a structural syllabus, and the assessment of grammatical ability, where discrete-item tests are preferred over extended-production tasks or, on the contrary, the outdated principles of non-intervention are on

the verge of resurfacing and fluency is prioritized over accuracy and complexity. While the roots of this state of affairs can often be traced back to the deeply-seated beliefs practitioners derive from their own past learning experience, the role played by leading publishers, teacher trainers and the exigencies of their local situations cannot be underestimated as well.

This brings us to the issues of the applicability and feasibility of pedagogical proposals derived from SLA theory and research, which partially explain why some aspects of FFI are so impervious to innovation in the Polish context. In the first place, research projects are often fraught with methodological problems, they operationalize similar concepts in different ways, and their findings are often mixed and inconclusive. A further note of caution is offered by Ellis when he writes: "It does not follow that the results obtained for a specific group of learners being taught a specific grammatical structure apply to all the individuals in a group, to other groups, or to other grammatical structures (...) it is simply not possible to advocate general solutions on the basis of 1, 2 or even 20 studies" (1998: 54). Following a similar line of reasoning, there are instructional techniques and procedures which may work admirably in some educational settings but the realities of others may greatly reduce their effectiveness or even render them utterly useless. This is the reason, for example, why caution should be exercised about extensive use of the dictogloss and other text-reconstruction procedures, input enrichment techniques or different variants of task-based instruction. Simply, no matter how sound some pedagogic solutions might have turned out to be, meager out-of-class exposure, a small number of language classes, the availability of a shared L1, or deeply entrenched preferences all conspire against their propitious application. As Larsen-Freeman (2003: 140) wisely points out, "Grammar teaching (any teaching!) is a complex process, which cannot be treated by repeating the same set of procedures while expecting the same results".

What follows from these words as well as Ellis's comment above is that the utility of pedagogic proposals can only be verified when they are employed not only in a particular broadly-defined instructional setting, but also in a specific classroom with a specific group of students. It is the recognition of the need for such verification that motivated the present author to carry out the two

empirical investigations reported in the final chapter of the present work.



## *Chapter Five*

# Investigating form-focused instruction in the foreign language classroom

## Introduction

The preceding four chapters have been theoretical in nature and aimed to offer a detailed overview of the key issues in the field of form-focused instruction, with a particular emphasis being placed on providing a range of theoretical, empirical and pedagogic arguments for the facilitative effect of pedagogic intervention as well as presenting a comprehensive and up-to date taxonomy of the techniques and procedures that practitioners can draw upon in teaching linguistic features. As can be seen from the foregoing discussion, the majority of SLA theorists and researchers subscribe to the view that grammar instruction should occupy an important place in the language curriculum. At the same time, however, despite extensive research endeavors in these areas, there is little consensus with respect to the language forms that should be targeted, the most propitious ways in which grammatical structures should be taught, the timing and intensity of intervention, its distribution across the curriculum, as well as the degree of its integration with the meaning-focused component (cf. Ellis 2006).

Even though the contributions made by applied linguists can hardly be discounted and the existing state of affairs can at least in part be ascribed to the complexity of the issues being investigated, it also speaks to the limitations of FFI studies. In the first place, there is a problem of scope, which is evident in the fact that the empirical investigations conducted to date have been confined to examining the effect of instruction on the acquisition of relatively few grammatical structures in just a handful of languages. Moreover, many researchers are so slavishly attached to the theoretical paradigms informing their research endeavors that they fail to objectively consider the feasibility of their pedagogical proposals and a priori deny the value of competing instructional options. Not less importantly, the available findings are often inconclusive or even

contradictory due to the inclusion of widely differing populations, the utilization of varying instructional conditions, research designs or data collection instruments, and imprecise operationalization of central variables, all of which virtually precludes reliable inter-study comparisons and future replications (Norris and Ortega 2000, 2001). Many FFI studies also suffer from methodological problems connected, among other things, with the failure to include measures of implicit knowledge, explore the long-term effect of the treatment or trace the subjects' movement through the orders and sequences of acquisition (cf. Ellis 2001b; Doughty 2003; Ellis 2004a; see Chapter One, section 1.5.2. for discussion).

What is of particular relevance to the present work, the bulk of FFI research has been carried out in second rather than foreign language settings, with the effect that its outcomes may not be directly applicable to the Polish educational context, and, somewhat surprisingly perhaps, this line of enquiry has hardly been pursued by Polish applied linguists. This is rather unfortunate since, as explained in Chapter One, being of relevance to both practitioners and researchers, empirical investigations of the effectiveness of grammar teaching can contribute to bridging the gap between the disparate social worlds the two groups represent. However, if reconciliation of this kind is indeed expected to materialize, teachers need to be provided with *provisional specifications* (Stenhouse 1975) with which they can experiment in their own classrooms, and these can only be fully feasible and relevant if they are derived from research conducted in the context for which they are ultimately intended. Besides, an attempt to offer such solutions is clearly indispensable in view of the fact that much grammar teaching in Polish schools is still based on the presentation of rules and controlled practice, with learners being provided with scant opportunities to deploy the structures taught in communication.

The main purpose of this chapter is to present and discuss the findings of two studies which were carried out with a view to filling the existing void in FFI research in Poland by exploring the impact of combinations of instructional microoptions on the acquisition of the English passive voice, past simple and present perfect tenses by Polish secondary school students. Although the two research projects differ with regard to their design, the targeted features, instructional treatment and characteristics of the participants, they share several crucial characteristics. For one thing, both of them



sought to examine the value of clusters of methodological microoptions with an eye to improving local teaching practices as well as offering tentative guidelines rather than making sweeping generalizations. Thus, although the two studies are to some extent representative of the confirmatory paradigm in their reliance on quantification, multiple posttesting, or the use of inferential statistics, they are perhaps best viewed as manifestations of an amalgam of *technical* and *practical action research*, with the researcher acting in the dual capacity of an applied linguist and the teacher (Carr and Kemmis 1986; Crookes 1993). What logically follows, the research projects utilized intact classes, they were conducted during naturally occurring lessons and focused on features that were a source of considerable learning difficulty, thus being characterized by high ecological validity (Ellis 2001b).

In accordance with the recommendations of leading SLA theorists and researchers (e.g. Norris and Ortega 2000; Doughty 2003; Ellis 2006), an attempt was made to measure the subjects' explicit and implicit knowledge, determine the durability of the gains and take into account the use of emergent forms indicating interlanguage change. On the other hand, contrary to Ellis's (1997: 91) suggestion that "Ideally, research directed at answering the question 'What options work best for language acquisition?' should seek to identify the contributions of individual options", the two studies drew upon a combination of several techniques and procedures for the reason that, as Ellis (1997) himself admits, classroom instruction is bound to consist of more than one FFI option. Much more importantly, it would be unethical for a teacher turned researcher to experiment with students over a prolonged period of time without being confident that, even if they fail to acquire the targeted features, other aspects of their communicative competence will benefit from the treatment applied.

For the sake of clarity, the chapter is divided into two sections, each of which is devoted to the discussion of one study. In each case, the rationale for the investigation is provided, its aims are clearly set out, the research design is described together with the methods of data collection and analysis, and the findings are presented and discussed. At the end of the chapter, the implications of the results of both research projects are briefly explored, and they subsequently serve as one the bases for proposing a set of guidelines

for grammar teaching in Polish schools laid out in the conclusion to the present work.

### 5.1. Study 1 – Form-focused instruction and the acquisition of simple and complex forms

The main impetus for the research project described in this section came from a study by Williams and Evans (1998) who investigated the impact of instruction on the acquisition of participial adjectives of emotive verbs (e.g. 'exciting' vs. 'excited') and the passive voice (e.g. 'All grades are sent to students in the mail') by intermediate-level ESL learners. The choice of the targeted features was pedagogically motivated, with the former being erroneously used in the learners' speech and writing despite the relative simplicity of the rule, and the latter hardly ever appearing in their output or classroom materials and being neither transparent nor straightforward in its formation and use. The researchers found that the provision of explicit instruction and negative feedback was more beneficial in the case of participial adjectives, an outcome which is explained in terms of the greater complexity of the passive as well as the subjects' lack of developmental readiness.

Although the study reported below differs in some important respects from the one conducted by Williams and Evans, it can be viewed as a follow-up to their investigation, in the sense that it sought to explore the value of FFI as a function of the inherent characteristics of the targeted forms and their status in the learners' interlanguage.<sup>1</sup> The TL features subjected to pedagogic intervention included the English past simple tense and passive constructions, and their choice was also mainly based on pedagogic concerns. The

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<sup>1</sup> It should also be noted that apart from the differences concerning the choice of the targeted forms, research design, the selection of instructional treatment and measures of TL knowledge, the two studies differ considerably in terms of their underlying assumptions. While the present author believes that FFI is indispensable in the foreign language context and seeks to identify the ways in which different grammatical structures can best be taught, similarly to many other proponents of the *focus on form approach* (see Chapter One, section 1.1.), Williams and Evans (1998) subscribe to the view that instruction is necessary and beneficial only in the case of some grammatical structures.

following subsections provide information about the rationale, aims and design of the research project, and present, analyze and discuss its findings. Since the instructional materials as well as the methods of data collection and analysis were very similar for both structures, they are described in the same sections and the same applies to the discussion of the results and their implications. However, in order to enhance clarity and make comparisons easier, separate subsections are devoted to the presentation and analysis of the findings.

#### 5.1.1. Choice of target forms and instructional treatment

The English *past simple tense* and *passive voice* forms are structures which differ in terms of their complexity and apparently had a different status in the subjects' interlanguages at the time the experiment was conducted. Since, as is the norm in most Polish schools, it is the structural syllabus that provides a basis for instruction and it is language forms that more or less explicitly function as the main unit of organization in popular coursebooks, the students were already familiar with the features and had been provided with numerous opportunities to practice them in text-manipulation and text-creation activities. Obviously, due to its formal and functional simplicity as well as greater frequency and utility, the past tense is introduced relatively early while the passive, which is much more complex and less useful, typically appears later in the instructional materials and its introduction is carefully graded so as not to overwhelm the learners. This was also true about the participants of the present study, with the past tense having been introduced at the end of grade 1 and the passive at the beginning of grade 3, and, thus, it could reasonably be assumed that they were at different developmental stages with regard to the two features, a point that will be elaborated upon below.

As most teachers would undoubtedly attest, the fact that a structure is introduced and thoroughly practiced constitutes no guarantee that learners will be able to use it accurately, meaningfully and appropriately. In fact, since it is quite common to encounter situations where students have considerable difficulty in using a particular feature correctly in highly controlled exercises where semantic and pragmatic factors are largely irrelevant, it is hardly surprising that employing it successfully in unplanned discourse is a feat that only very few learners are capable of accomplishing. Similar

problems were experienced by the subjects of the present study who were observed to frequently omit the past tense '-ed' marker or fail to employ the correct irregular form, as well as to make constant errors in forming and using passive constructions in their spoken and written output. This shows that the motivation for selecting the two features as the aim of pedagogic intervention was primarily pedagogic. Of course, these were not the only structures that the learners found particularly problematic and their choice was also motivated by the factors likely to influence the acquisition of tacit TL knowledge discussed in section 4.2.3. of Chapter Four. Thus, before turning our attention to the research questions addressed in the study, it appears warranted to take a closer look at some inherent characteristics of the targeted features, the issues involved in their acquisition, and the extent to which they were part of the learners' explicit and implicit representation.

As regards the English affirmative past simple tense forms, they are relatively easy to teach as explicit knowledge due to their formal simplicity (i.e. a single element is added to a grammatical string) as well as the fact that they manifest straightforward and transparent form-meaning-function relationships (i.e. a single form realizes a single meaning) (cf. Pica 1985; Green and Hecht 1992; Ellis 1997). However, the situation is much more complex when it comes to the development of their implicit representation since, in this case, the amount of learning difficulty depends to a large extent on whether we deal with irregular or regular verbal morphology. As for irregular verbs, they are frequent in the input, which is perhaps hardly surprising in view of the fact that the 13 most frequent verbs in English (i.e. 'be', 'have', 'do', 'say', 'make', 'go', 'take', 'come', 'see', 'get', 'know', 'give', 'find') are all irregular (Pinker 1991), the morphological differences involved in their formation are perceptually salient (cf. Klein, Dietrich and Noyau 1995b), and, most importantly perhaps, there are grounds to believe that their acquisition mainly involves item- rather than rule-based learning (Salaberry 2000). Consequently, irregular forms are likely to be stored as isolated lexical units in what Skehan (1998) calls the memory-based system. As such, they are not subject to developmental constraints and can quite easily be integrated into implicit knowledge as long as learners are supplied with ample exposure and frequent practice opportunities. By contrast, regular verbs are generally less frequent and cognitively less salient, their acquisition

mainly involves system learning and they require a relatively high level of processing capacity (Stage 4 operations) in terms of the Multidimensional Model (see Chapter Three, section 3.3.2.). Thus, although it is possible to envisage cases where past forms are acquired as lexical units (e.g. 'liked') and the phonetic shape of the '-ed' suffix might make some verbs more salient (e.g. 'wanted'), the acquisition of the regular past tense marker is developmentally constrained, its integration into the IL system is far from instantaneous, and, when it eventually occurs, learners need time to automatize their implicit knowledge to use the feature more accurately and less variably.

To make matters even more complicated, irrespective of the differences between regular and irregular inflections, foreign language learners may find them difficult to acquire because these features are often semantically redundant, with the situational context and the presence of adverbials compensating for non-suppliance or inaccurate use. Additionally, as some researchers found, past tense forms may be infrequent in classroom discourse (Long and Sato 1983). In all likelihood, a combination of such features accounts for the fact that past tense morphology in English is typically acquired in a series of stages, with learners first using a simple form of the verb regardless of whether it is regular or irregular (e.g. 'watch', 'go'), and then manifesting the so-called *U-shaped behavior* (Kellerman 1985). Thus, past forms are initially acquired as lexical units (e.g. 'watched', 'went', etc.), the '-ed' inflection is then overgeneralized (e.g. 'goed'), and, ultimately, the different verb categories are sorted out and the target form is internalized (Takashima and Ellis 1999). Moreover, research shows that due to its greater frequency and saliency, irregular morphology emerges before regular forms (Sato 1990; Salaberry 2000). Bardovi-Harlig and Reynolds (1995) also found that lexical aspects can play a part as well since the past tense marking is first applied to verbs referring to events (e.g. 'arrive'), then activity verbs (e.g. 'eat') and only in the last stage to state verbs (e.g. 'want'), although such considerations may be more relevant in advanced stages of acquisition (cf. Salaberry 2000).

As for the students participating in this study, all of them had been learning English for at least three years (see section 5.1.3. below) and, therefore, it was taken as given that most of them knew the rule for the formation of regular past tense and were familiar

with at least the most common irregular forms, an assumption that the researcher informally verified prior to the experiment by asking a series of questions in one of the classes. Apart from manifesting well-developed explicit knowledge of the feature, many students were capable of deploying it in relatively spontaneous speech, but, here, a lot of variability could be observed with base forms of verbs sometimes being used and the '-ed' ending quite frequently being dropped. For this reason, the main challenge for most of these learners appeared to be gaining greater control of a feature that was partly integrated into their interlanguage systems, although there were also such who found it difficult to use past tense forms in unplanned discourse and apparently had not yet succeeded in incorporating them into their implicit representation.

Turning our attention to the English passive voice, there can be little doubt that its form, meaning and use are much less transparent and straightforward than in the case of past tense morphology and, thus, even the relatively modest goal of learning it as explicit, declarative knowledge places heavy cognitive demands on students. On the face of it, as Larsen-Freeman argues, mastering the form of the passive should not create excessive difficulty "since the passive is formed in English with the ubiquitous *be* and *get* verbs, which students have probably learned to conjugate correctly by the time the passive is introduced. Similarly, forming the passive requires that students use a structure they will have encountered before, namely, the past participle" (2003: 46). She is equally sanguine about the meaning dimension, a position which she justifies by saying that "All languages have ways to shift the focus in an utterance, and the passive exists to do just this in English" (2003: 46). In fact, in her view, the greatest challenge is learning how to use the structure appropriately and it is this dimension that the teacher should mostly be concerned with.

Although such a stance may indeed be justified when it comes to fairly advanced students, it is overly optimistic in the case of learners at preintermediate and intermediate levels in mixed ability classes which are often the norm in the Polish educational setting. In the first place, as Williams and Evans (1998: 141) point out, "the passive is relatively complex, especially in combination with tenses other than the simple present", and while the past simple should also be unproblematic, the formation of passive constructions involving perfect and progressive tenses as well as modal auxiliaries

is likely to tax the skills of even the most gifted students. It should also be pointed out that many learners never actually manage to master the English tense system in its entirety and the past participle forms of irregular verbs can easily be confused with their past tense counterparts, which makes the picture painted by Larsen-Freeman rather detached from classroom reality. It is perhaps much easier to accept the claims about the meaning and use dimensions, although the former may not be so simple when learners lack the requisite knowledge of tense and aspect distinctions, whereas the latter may be of little relevance to someone who cannot form a sentence in the passive voice correctly. Thus, it stands to reason that, in the context of Polish senior high school, it is learning the form of the passive that is of greatest importance to learners as only in this way can they gain access to the higher-level dimensions of meaning and use, and it is this assumption that the author based upon when designing the present study.

In the light of the fact that the passive may be so difficult to learn consciously and declaratively, it is obvious that its successful integration into the implicit system is bound to represent a formidable task that some learners will never attain. Therefore, the development of the ability to use the feature in unplanned discourse must necessarily be a lengthy and gradual process. Despite the fact that the stages for the acquisition of the passive have not so far been well documented in the literature, such a stance finds support in SLA theory and research (cf. Williams and Evans 1998). For example, it could be argued that achieving psycholinguistic readiness in the case of many passive constructions would be tantamount to being able to perform Stage 6 processing operations as posited by the Multidimensional Model, a condition that even fairly advanced learners may not always be capable of fulfilling. Although there can be little doubt that, similarly to children acquiring English as their L1, L2 learners might well acquire some easy passive forms as lexical units (e.g. 'it is made', 'it was built') and manage to deploy them in real-time communication (Gordon and Chafetz 1990), the development of consistent and stable implicit representation necessarily involves system rather than item learning and the extension of the rule-based system (Skehan 1998).

It should also be noted that the passive voice meets at least two of the criteria that make TL features prime candidates for FFI. For one thing, the feature may lack saliency because even if the

teacher uses English all the time, which is unlikely in monolingual settings, it is bound to be infrequent in classroom discourse unless it happens to be the focus of a particular lesson. If we add to this scant out-of-class exposure, which constitutes a hallmark of most foreign language contexts, it becomes clear that the chances of the learners picking up the passive naturally are extremely slim. In addition, it could be argued that passive constructions may be semantically redundant since (1) the concepts they represent can easily be expressed by alternative means, and (2) as long as the word order and the verbs 'be' or 'get' are in place, it does not matter that much in many situations whether or not there is subject-verb agreement (e.g. the utterance 'The books was bought' is likely to be interpreted correctly despite the erroneous auxiliary form), the correct grammatical tense is used (e.g. when a learner says 'A new highway is built' instead of 'A new highway is being built', the linguistic or situational context will typically help the interlocutor figure out what kind of temporal reference is being made), or the past participle has been correctly formed (e.g. an utterance such as 'The room was paint' is unlikely to be misunderstood given the inanimate subject or the topic).

As regards the subjects of the study, there was a lot of variation when it comes to their mastery of the feature. Several months before the experiment the learners had been acquainted with the rules concerning the formation of the passive with different tenses and modals, and they had been provided with multiple opportunities to apply them in a wide range of production-based and comprehension-oriented activities. However, most of the students still experienced difficulty forming the more demanding constructions (e.g. 'The fence is being repaired', 'She will have to be taken to hospital', etc.), which indicates that the existing declarative knowledge was still in the process of being proceduralized. Quite a few learners were seemingly capable of using some passive forms successfully in communication, but, on most occasions, these appeared to be known as isolated items, which is evidenced by the fact that they were quite simple and typically involved the same verbs (e.g. 'The house is situated', 'He was seen', etc.). Although there were also several individuals who were able to employ more complicated passive constructions with a range of verbs in relatively free production, they were exceptions and their overall level of proficiency far exceeded the class average. Thus, it was assumed that



most of the students were yet to integrate the rules governing the formation and use of the passive into their IL systems, and the main challenge for the researcher was to provide FFI treatment which would trigger the conversion of the existing explicit into implicit knowledge. Obviously, in accordance with the theory of instructed language learning laid out in Chapter Three, it was necessary to make the preliminary assumption that most of the students were developmentally ready to acquire the passive used with at least some tenses and modal verbs, even though it was clear that it did not apply in equal measure to every single learner.

As the discussion in Chapter Four demonstrated, there exist numerous methodological microoptions that teachers can draw upon when providing FFI, an important caveat being that not all of them are likely to be equally effective for all TL features in all educational contexts and, even more importantly, that their selection should hinge upon the aims of pedagogic intervention. Thus, for example, it would be pointless to use C-R activities with students who are already familiar with relevant rules or ask learners to complete production-based focused communication tasks centering around forms they cannot yet apply accurately in controlled exercises. For obvious reasons, such issues were carefully considered when deciding on the instructional treatment employed in the present study, and an attempt was made to match it with the kind of knowledge of the targeted structures the subjects manifested as well as to make it compatible with the pedagogic goals the researcher hoped to attain.

As pointed out above, there were grounds to assume that directly prior to the intervention virtually all of the students were familiar with the rules governing the formation of the past tense, they knew the most common irregular forms, and did not experience much difficulty in using the feature in planned discourse. Although the situation was more complex in the case of the passive, most of the subjects were acquainted with the relevant rules, they knew the most frequent past participial forms and could successfully employ many passive constructions when they had ample time to think about form. Thus, rather than provide direct explanations or set up text-manipulation activities which could at best only further proceduralize and automatize their explicit representation, a decision was made to deploy FFI microoptions that could contribute to the integration of the targeted features into the implicit knowledge store

and, in some cases, aid learners in gaining greater control thereof. Consequently, the relatively implicit techniques of recasting, input and output enhancement were utilized in the hope that they would enable learners to use past tense and passive forms more confidently and consistently in spontaneous communication. At the same time, it was expected that the increased exposure as well as the numerous opportunities to attend to form-function mappings during message conveyance would strengthen the students' explicit knowledge and make them more likely to monitor their output in real-time processing (see section 5.1.5. below for more details about the instructional treatment).

To the author's best knowledge, no other research project to date has explored the effect of such a combination of FFI techniques on the acquisition of the linguistic features selected for the purpose of this study. As for the English passive, the only study that could be invoked is the one by Williams and Evans (1998) mentioned earlier in this section, but the researchers elected to employ direct explanations and corrective feedback. Also, their primary concern appeared to be the use of passive constructions in the present and past simple tenses and, thus, the focus was much narrower than in the present investigation. When it comes to past tense morphology, quite a few studies have been conducted, but these have mainly relied on the application of single instructional microoptions such as output enhancement (e.g. Nobuyoshi and Ellis 1993; Takashima 1994; Takashima and Ellis 1999) or recasting (Doughty and Varela 1998), and all of them provide quite convincing evidence for the beneficial effect of the treatment. One case where several techniques were employed was the research project carried out by Benati (2005), but, here, the objective was to compare the value of input processing and output practice rather than to explore the benefits of FFI *per se*.

### 5.1.2. Research questions

As noted above, the study aimed to explore the differential effect of a combination of relatively implicit FFI techniques and procedures on the acquisition of the English past tense morphology and passive constructions. Specifically, the following research questions were addressed:

- 1) the impact of instruction operationalized as a combination of input enhancement, output enhancement and recasting on the frequency of use and production accuracy of the targeted features in planned and unplanned discourse;
- 2) the extent to which the effect of the intervention was durable, as measured on immediate and delayed posttests;
- 3) the effect of the treatment on the subjects' interlanguage development, understood as the use of forms which were not entirely accurate but indicated gradual approximation to TL norms (e.g. 'He breaked', 'The fence have been paint');
- 4) the influence of instruction on the learners' awareness of the features, defined as their ability to engage in self- and peer-correction;
- 5) the occurrence of overgeneralization errors in other areas of English grammar that could be traced back to the treatment applied;
- 6) the variable effect of FFI on different lexical verbs with the purpose of determining the extent to which the potential gains could be attributed to item or system learning;
- 7) the differential impact of the intervention on individual learners and the degree of intra-subject variation;
- 8) the extent to which the complexity of the targeted features (i.e. past tense morphology vs. the passive voice) influenced the findings in all of the preceding areas.

Depending on the requirements of specific research questions, the data were subjected to quantitative or qualitative analyses and, in some cases, a combination of both. The procedures employed to investigate the issues enumerated above are described in section 5.1.6. below.

### 5.1.3. Design

Since the researcher was the subjects' regular classroom teacher, the investigation can be viewed as an example of *action research* which served the dual purpose of assisting students in overcoming the learning difficulties they experienced and offering tentative pedagogical recommendations that could be experimented with in similar instructional settings. With two different TL features being targeted, the research project actually comprised two separate studies, both of which were *pre-experimental* in nature and employed a *one group pretest-*

*posttest (1, 2 and 3) design.* An undeniable strength of the study was that in addition to the immediate posttest administered right after the instructional treatment, it also included two delayed posttests, which enabled the researcher to explore both the short- and long-term effects of the intervention as well as to determine the extent to which the improvement was maintained over time. On the other hand, what could be regarded as a potential weakness was the failure to include a control group. This is because, although pre-experiments do have the potential to generate valuable insights into the process of L2 acquisition which can serve as a starting point for more rigorous experimental and quasi-experimental studies, they do not provide a basis for making strong claims about causality (Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991).

However, in this particular case, the adoption of a pre-experimental design proved to be a matter of practical necessity and can be viewed as fully warranted for a number of reasons. In the first place, the researcher taught only one class at the required level and a decision to involve other classes and teachers would have meant that a number of additional extraneous variables could affect the findings in unpredictable ways. If, for instance, a class consisting of students that the researcher did not know and had little contact with had been included in the study as a control group, doubts would have inevitably arisen with regard to the equivalence of the two groups, due to the diverse levels of proficiency represented by individual students, different sets of requirements and grading criteria adopted by various teachers, and a host of other factors. Also, it would have taken considerable skill to convince the teacher of such a class to avoid dealing with the targeted structures in the period between the pretest and the final posttest, particularly if they had been the focus of some of the units in the coursebook. And even if the colleague had proved to be so accommodating, it would have been close to impossible to determine whether or not the past tense and passive voice forms were in some way addressed during his lessons. This is because, for practical reasons, the researcher would have been in no position to observe each of the classes conducted, and audio- or video-taping them would not have been a viable option in view of teachers' well-known reluctance to allow it. Apart from such practical considerations, the inclusion of a control group might not have been the best solution on ethical grounds. After all, eight separate testing procedures totally unrelated to

regular classroom proceedings would have had to be conducted in such a group and, although the oral tests could perhaps be treated as useful communication tasks, on the whole, such an intervention could have reduced the limited learning opportunities that senior high school students are afforded. Also, leaving aside the difficulty of verification brought up above, placing a three-month ban on the teaching of past tense and passive voice forms does not seem to be an acceptable course of action, particularly when it is not made up for by the presence of some intensive instructional treatment at a later time.

It should also be pointed out that Larsen-Freeman and Long's (1991) assertion about researchers who opt for pre-experimental designs being prohibited from making claims about cause-and-effect relationships does not really apply to action research, a manifestation of which the present study constitutes. Even though, for obvious reasons, it was the intention of the researcher to offer tentative recommendations for teachers working in similar contexts, the main impetus for the intervention was the difficulty a particular group of students experienced in employing past tense inflections and passive voice forms. Therefore, the research project was primarily aimed at identifying FFI microoptions which would ameliorate these problems to some extent. In such situations, even a modest improvement in the subjects' ability to use a feature more accurately, meaningfully and appropriately, particularly in free production tasks, is as important to the researcher as it would have been to language teachers informally testing out different techniques and procedures in their own classrooms. In fact, from the point of view of a practitioner, noticeable gains in the performance of just a few learners in an overall weak class may testify to the utility of a particular option. Besides, although the impact of intervention may at times be insignificant when measured in terms of numbers, it may translate into greater involvement and motivation on the part of the students, an effect that would be more than welcome in the vast majority of classrooms.

As illustrated in Table 5.1., which provides the details of the research schedule, the pretest for both targeted structures was conducted roughly one week before the onset of the treatment, which was spread over the period of two weeks and six classes, and followed by three posttests administered one, four and ten weeks after the completion of pedagogic intervention. What should

Time	Past tense	Passive
Week 1	Pretest	
Week 2	Treatment (6 lessons)	
Week 3	Treatment (6 lessons)	
Week 4	Immediate posttest	Pretest
Week 5		Treatment (6 lessons)
Week 6		Treatment (6 lessons)
Week 7		Immediate posttest
Week 8	Delayed posttest 1	
Week 9		
Week 10		
Week 11		Delayed posttest 1
Week 12		
Week 13	Delayed posttest 2	
Week 14		
Week 15		
Week 16		Delayed posttest 2

*Table 5.1. Research schedule for the past tense and the passive.*

also be emphasized is that the treatment for the past tense preceded that for the passive, with the effect that the two did not overlap, and the pretests as well as the immediate and delayed posttests were also carried out during separate lessons. The utilization of such a set-up was to a large extent dictated by the logistical problems that would have been involved in implementing different instructional treatments during a single lesson as well as the unfeasibility to squeeze all of the activities planned into a 45-minute period. Apart from such practical considerations, the decision to separate the treatment and testing sessions also stemmed from the researcher's desire to avoid the danger of the students' limited attentional resources being excessively stretched and divided between two diverse linguistic features. In addition, such a solution minimized the possibility that the completion of a written or spoken task focusing on one structure would unduly affect the performance on the measures gauging the mastery of the other, thus reducing the reliability of the findings. It could be expected, for example, that the use of irregular past tense forms in a communicative task in one part of a lesson could have diminished the accuracy with which the subjects would have used irregular past participles in an activity requiring the application of the passive later in the same class.

It should also be noted that efforts were made not to draw the subjects' attention to the targeted features between the end of the treatment and the administration of delayed posttest 2, and the use of materials and tasks that could have inadvertently achieved such a focus was carefully avoided. Of course, the two forms did appear in some of the texts and exercises included in the coursebook as well as in the additional materials used. The point is, however, that such resources were not doctored in any way, and, thus, the students' in-class contact with the features was extensive rather than intensive. Despite such efforts, there still exists the possibility that some of the students decided to deliberately concentrate on the forms between posttests 1 and 3, either because instruction sensitized them to the problems they experienced or they simply suspected that other tests with a similar focus were coming. Although such a danger has to be reckoned with, the chances of this having indeed occurred are slim in view of the information gleaned from the background questionnaires the learners completed.

#### 5.1.4. Subjects

The subjects were 33 Polish former secondary school students, all of whom participated in the six treatment sessions and completed the written posttests, and 16 of whom provided data on the oral tasks (see section 5.1.6. for details concerning the testing instruments and data analysis). At the time the research project was conducted, the learners were attending the third grade and they had just entered into the second semester, which means that all of them had received at least two and a half years of English instruction in secondary school. Since the study took place in the school year 2001/2002, the students were not yet affected by the educational reform which reduced secondary school instruction from 4 to 3 years, and they still had well over one year to prepare for their final examinations and make decisions about the choice of the institution of higher education they wished to attend.

As regards the nature of language instruction the participants were provided with, it was limited to three 45-minute English classes a week, with the students being divided into two groups of 16 and 17 for their language lessons in accordance with the alphabetical order. As dictated by the policy of the school, a similar arrangement was typically followed in grades 1 and 2, and only in grade 4 was the

number of contact hours increased by one with an eye to helping students better prepare for their school-leaving or university entrance examinations, a solution adopted by the majority of schools at the time. Although the researcher had been teaching the subjects for almost two and a half years, it was still rather difficult for him to pass a definitive judgment on their overall level of proficiency because the class was a classic example of a mixed ability group, with learners differing quite considerably in their language ability. Nonetheless, the class as a whole could be said to represent an intermediate level of advancement in English, or B1, to use the descriptions introduced by the *Common European Framework*, but it has to be kept in mind that it also comprised quite a few students who could be placed either above and below this threshold.

Roughly one week before the first pretest focusing on the past simple tense, the students were requested to fill in a short questionnaire. In order to avoid potential misunderstandings, the survey was entirely in Polish and contained items intended to provide the researcher with such background information as the duration of English study, their reasons for learning the language and attitudes towards it, as well as out-of-school exposure. Numerical analysis of the responses revealed that 19 subjects (57.58%) had been learning English for approximately three years, which indicates that the beginning of classroom instruction had coincided with their move from elementary to secondary school. As for the other participants, they reported that they had been learning English from 4 to 10 years, with the group average standing at 4.1 years. When asked to identify the reasons why they had decided to learn English, the students most frequently pointed to its usefulness as a tool enabling communication with people from all over the world (20), the facilitating role it could play in future education and professional career (17), or the relative ease of learning it in comparison with other foreign languages (10). Since only two subjects stated that they had in fact been forced to study English, it could be assumed that the students were motivated to learn the language, with instrumental motives being the most prominent, and they displayed positive attitudes towards it. This assumption appears to be fully warranted in view of the fact that 28 (84.85%) participants declared that they enjoyed learning English, with three stating that it depended on their grades and only three answering that they did not like it because it was difficult and required too much work.



As is typically the case in a foreign language context, all of the students reported having very little contact with the TL outside school and mostly mentioned English films, songs, magazines, computer games or Internet websites as prime sources of exposure. Only one student stated that he occasionally had the opportunity to use English for communication, two declared that they regularly corresponded with Americans via e-mail, and six reported attending private lessons or courses once a week. In addition, only 13 (39.39%) students admitted that their learning English at home was not confined to completing the mandatory assignments or preparing for upcoming tests, and also occasionally involved doing additional exercises from grammar or vocabulary practice books, reading simplified versions of English classics, using educational computer software or listening to CDs or tapes. Although such scant out-of-class access to the TL is highly disconcerting, it can be viewed as advantageous from the point of view of the researcher, as it considerably reduced the likelihood of the subjects practicing the targeted structures on their own in the course of the experiment.

#### 5.1.5. Instructional treatment

As mentioned when discussing the design of the study, the treatment was identical for the past tense and the passive, and it took place during regularly-scheduled English lessons taught to an intact class of third-grade secondary school students. It was spread over the period of two weeks and divided into six segments, each of which was designed for approximately 25-30 minutes in length and occurred in the first part of each class to allow for the possibility that some of the activities might take slightly longer than planned, a precaution that proved to be fully justified on several occasions. The remaining 15-20 minutes of each class was devoted to pursuing the regular curricular goals and working on coursebook texts and exercises.

The instructional treatment took the form of a cluster of relatively implicit microoptions of *input enhancement*, *recasting* and *output enhancement* (see sections 4.1.1.2.2. and 4.1.2. in Chapter Four). As elucidated in section 5.1.1., the application of these three techniques is likely to contribute to the growth and automatization of implicit knowledge and, at the same time, lead to increased awareness of the targeted features and more efficient monitoring of

the output produced. Moreover, opting for a combination of these FFI microoptions in addressing problematic areas of the TL ensures that students will have multiple opportunities to attend to and notice a specific feature, which is bound to be more beneficial than an application of any single device and greatly enhances the ultimate effect of the intervention.

At the same time, however, there are several ways in which input enhancement, output enhancement and recasting could be sequenced in a lesson, and it stands to reason that not all of the solutions would be equally effective in fostering the acquisition of past tense and passive voice forms. For instance, it could be decided to employ them in rather random ways, using recasts and clarification requests variably at different points of a class and, in the process, exposing students to texts in which the target forms would be enhanced in some way. Alternatively, we might choose to be slightly more consistent and first set up communicative tasks during which errors involving the target form would be responded to by means of recasting and, should that fail to lead to uptake, output enhancement, and only towards the end of the lesson would the students be provided with enhanced input. Still, both of these proposals suffer from serious weaknesses since the former lacks consistency and might confuse the learners, and the latter makes little sense on both theoretical and pedagogic grounds. This is because, being input-based, a recast does not require a response, it would be difficult for teachers to determine the optimum amount of time they should wait before resorting to output enhancement, and, most importantly perhaps, using a clarification request after a reformulation would be unnatural and overly obtrusive. Therefore, the present author believes that two key variables which should be considered in sequencing microoptions in FFI are the *requirement for generating output* and the *level of implicitness*, with input-based and less implicit techniques preceding output-based and more explicit ones, which, in turn, could be augmented with input-based corrective feedback when the student is incapable of successful self-correction.

In accordance with this principle, the subjects were first provided with texts in which the targeted forms were typographically enhanced and which supplied a kind of stimulus material they could base upon in the performance of subsequent activities, and only later were they requested to produce relatively spontaneous output. At this stage, an attempt was made to follow all the errors in

the use of the features by a clarification request deployed in the hope of making the problem area prominent, enhancing the likelihood of the students noticing the gap between what they had said and the TL form, and providing them with the opportunity to modify their output. At the same time, in order to avoid potential ambiguity and minimize the possibility of misinterpretation, most of the other inaccuracies in the learners' speech were ignored.<sup>2</sup>

Since output enhancement requires learners to self-correct, thus indicating that they have in fact noticed the mismatch, it was expected that the students would attempt to rephrase their incorrect utterances in response to the negative feedback. When the modification was successful and the error in the use of the past tense or the passive was successfully eliminated, the interaction simply went on until another inaccuracy occurred. By contrast, in cases where the learners failed to provide a reformulation or generated yet another contribution including an error, a recast was deployed to rephrase the inaccurate utterance, the correct form being emphasized with added stress. This was aimed at making the contrast between the erroneous and TL forms more transparent and, thus, supplying the learner with one more chance to notice the gap in his or her IL within the cognitive window of opportunity (Doughty and Williams 1998c). Irrespective of whether the learners integrated the correct form in their subsequent output, thus showing evidence of successful uptake, no further attempts were made to address the problem, the focus on form episode was terminated and the communication was allowed to proceed. This decision was motivated by the desire to avoid excessive obtrusiveness which would likely have changed message conveyance into a grammar practice activity. Therefore, on all such occasions, the teacher either allowed the students to carry on speaking or posed a follow-up question to restore the meaning-centered nature of the interaction.

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<sup>2</sup> As the analysis of the treatment sessions demonstrated, it was not always possible to address all the errors involving the past tense or the passive, particularly in situations where several consecutive utterances contained inaccuracies of this kind. By the same token, on some occasions, it was necessary to deal with an error in some other area to clarify what the learner meant or to ward off a potential communication breakdown. On the whole, however, the vast majority of errors in the use of the target forms were responded to and a very small number of other inaccuracies were addressed.

The outcome of sequencing the FFI microoptions in such a way was that the intervention could also be viewed in terms of a *focused communication task*, which required the use of a particular feature for the expected communicative outcome to be reached and where a focus on the target forms was achieved both through design and methodology (cf. Ellis 1997). After all, depending on the nature of the activities that the subjects were requested to perform on the basis of the texts containing multiple exemplars of the grammatical structures in focus, it is possible to talk about comprehension-based or production-oriented implicit structure-based tasks (Fotos 2002). Likewise, the provision of covert corrective feedback could be regarded as an additional instructional measure aimed at enhancing the form-meaning-function mappings methodologically. Obviously, despite the fact the aims of the treatment were at no point explicitly stated, logic dictates that the learners were fully aware of the focus of the activities employed since they represented a conspicuous departure from what normally transpired in the classroom, in that they were repeated in six consecutive lessons and closely resembled one another. In addition, given the fact that the targeted features were visually enhanced in the instructional materials and the aim of the corrective feedback was quite transparent, it would be naïve to assume that the subjects did not eventually become aware of the goals of the intervention. Even though some researchers would claim that it is more appropriate to talk about text-creation rather than focused communication in such circumstances, the requirement of lack of awareness that a particular form is being targeted does not appear to be crucial, or is even impossible to fulfill. In the view of the present author, the learners' alertness could even be regarded as beneficial since it may have performed the function of an advance organizer, priming the students to notice the forms and engage in the process of matching (Klein 1986).

When it comes to past tense morphology, in the first phase of each of the six treatment sessions, the subjects were requested to read a short passage where the irregular and regular verb forms were visually enhanced, with the former being highlighted through the use of capital letters and the latter through the application of bolding and italics (e.g. 'She WENT to the bathroom and *washed* her hands'). Since the students had been observed to heavily rely on the verb 'to be' when talking about the past and there was a danger that this strategy could be transferred into the pretest and posttest

tasks, thus masking the real effect of the intervention, both this form and other modal auxiliaries were not typographically enhanced. The texts used for this purpose were narratives gleaned from a variety of sources and in all of them the past simple tense was the predominant means of expressing past time reference, with the use of the past progressive and past perfect tenses being reduced to the minimum. The narratives were representative of such general interest topics as accidents, natural disasters, holiday traditions, vacation, traveling and proverbs, and they were followed by a set of multiple-choice, true-false or open-ended questions that the students answered on their own and then discussed the responses with their partners. In addition, each text was accompanied by a pair or group work activity where the subjects were instructed to come up with a similar story using the prompts provided or their own experience, which could be regarded as a kind of focused communication task, or, at least a relatively spontaneous text-creation activity in its own right (see Appendix 1 for a representative example of the instructional materials).

Each segment contained two phases during which the students had the chance to engage in meaning-focused communication in a whole-class setting. This happened either when they gave an account of the narrative in reaction to some kind of elicitation (e.g. 'What did they do when the earthquake began?') and responded to the teacher's follow-up questions regarding its content (e.g. 'How did they feel when they saw the city after the disaster?'), or, alternatively, when they told the story that they had come up in the course of group work activities. In fact, in such cases, it is also possible to describe the resulting discourse as an example of focused communication. Both during whole-class interaction of this kind as well as tasks performed in dyads or small groups, clarification requests and recasts were employed each time the learner made a mistake in the use of the past tense by: (1) omitting the regular past tense marker (e.g. 'A lot of people drown'), (2) providing an incorrect form of an irregular verb or using its base form (e.g. 'He felt down on the floor', 'The river freezed' or 'Sally get a present'), (3) adding some other inflection to both regular and irregular verbs (e.g. 'He going to Paris in May' or 'Frank and his sister lives in London at the time'), or (4) using an incorrect grammatical tense such as the present perfect or past progressive in contexts where the simple past was required, with the last two error types occurring

rather sporadically.<sup>3</sup> As noted earlier, a clarification request was used in the first instance and, when the students failed to modify their output or committed yet another mistake in the use of the feature, a recast was employed with the rephrased part being highlighted by additional stress or rising intonation. The intervention stopped at this point regardless of the presence of successful uptake. The following exchanges taken from transcripts of the treatment classes illustrate some of the possibilities:

- (1) S. *She hided behind the door and waited (...)*  
 T. *... Sorry? I don't understand (clarification request)*  
 S. *She hided aha ... she hid behind the door because it is safe (...)* (successful self-repair)
- (2) S. *(...) and then we went to Paris and we stay in a beautiful hotel*  
 T. *... What do you mean? (clarification request)*  
 S. *... (2) we stay ... we staying in a beautiful hotel*  
 T. *ok ... you stayed in a beautiful hotel (recast)*  
 S. *yes we stayed in a beautiful hotel and we had a very good time (successful uptake)*
- (3) S. *Then he decide to leave her*  
 T. *... Pardon? (clarification request)*  
 S. *he decide ... he decide to leave her*  
 T. *he decided to leave her (recast) ... (3) (the teacher is waiting but there is no uptake) All right ... And why did he do that?*

Exactly the same procedures were utilized in the case of the passive, the only exception being that in three of the lessons the phase devoted to the instructional treatment had to be extended to about 35 minutes so that the students could complete the activities. Although this means that the overall amount of time during which the subjects were exposed to and used the feature was slightly longer than in the case of the past tense, the impact of this factor can be viewed as negligible since the students mainly needed the extra time

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<sup>3</sup> It could rightly be argued that the employment of the wrong tense is not connected with the correct use of past tense inflectional forms but, rather, with the failure to take into account the linguistic and situational context, and, thus, it represents problems with the meaning and use dimension. While such a stance is fully warranted, the researcher felt that it would have been unwise to ignore such errors. It could also reasonably be argued that the provision of recasts and opportunities for modified output in such cases did in fact aid learners in gaining greater control over past tense morphology.

to read the texts and answer the comprehension questions. That this should have happened is in fact not surprising given the complexity of the passive in terms of not only its form, but also the form-meaning-function mappings it realizes. As was the case with the past tense, the texts contained multiple instances of the form with different tenses and modal auxiliaries, all of which were visually enhanced by means of bolding and a different font size (e.g. 'He was sent to prison and has not been seen since then'). The texts covered such general interest topics as festivals, historical events, inventions as well as descriptions of things, places and processes. They were followed by closed and open-ended comprehension questions that the subjects first answered individually and then discussed with their deskmates. Each treatment session also included an additional text-creation or, depending on the criteria adopted, focused communication task which was to be completed in pairs and small groups, and required the learners to come up with a text similar to the one they had read using different passive constructions. The prompts the learners were supplied with varied from one lesson to another, ranging from full sentences through sentence fragments and isolated words to visual stimuli in the form of pictures (see Appendix 2 for an exemplary worksheet).

As student-student interaction was in progress, the teacher walked around the classroom and reacted to errors in the use of the passive by means of output enhancement and recasting in the manner described above, and the same techniques were utilized during whole-class feedback sessions following the completion of each task. In particular, the treatment followed inaccuracies in such areas as: (1) a failure to use a passive construction in cases where its employment was required by the context, as manifested by the absence of the verb 'to be' and the utilization of the base or inflected form of the main verb (e.g. 'The victims taken to the hospital', 'The house paint white after the war', 'Then the students sending the information'), (2) an attempt at the employment of the passive, as evidenced by the use of the verb 'to be' and a verb, with one or both of these being inaccurate in some way (e.g. 'The car was repairing', 'The two statues has been painted lately', 'The holiday is celebrate at the end of May', 'The medicine should been keep in a cold and dark place'), and (3) the use of a passive structure which was correct in terms of form but inappropriate in a particular linguistic and situational context with regard to its tense and aspect (e.g. using past

simple passive in a situation where future reference was indispensable, as in 'A new conference center was constructed next year'). The following FFEs which occurred during the treatment sessions exemplify the ways in which output enhancement and recasting were combined to deal with such inaccuracies:

- (4) S. *The place is beautiful and it has be visit by many people*  
T. ... *I don't understand ... Could you repeat? (clarification request)*  
S. *The place is ah is beautiful and it has been visit ah visited by people (...) (self-repair)*
- (5) S. (...) *the area is being examining by scientists at the moment*  
T. ... *Pardon? (clarification request)*  
S. ... (2) *the place ... (2) the area is being examining by the scientists ... they look for proofs*  
T. *yes the area is being examined right now (recast)*  
S. ... *yes they are examined and look for proofs (unsuccessful uptake)*
- (6) S. *The books then is given to library across the country*  
T. ... *I don't get it. What do you mean? (clarification request)*  
S. ... *the books ah gave the books to library*  
T. *ok the books are given to libraries (recast) ... (2) (the teacher is waiting for the uptake move) ...and what happens with them later?*  
S. ... *aha they are given to library and (...) (successful uptake)*

The analysis of the transcripts of the instructional sessions (see section 5.1.6. below for details) for the past tense showed that the level of student participation differed somewhat from one class to another and it declined quite considerably during the last treatment segment, which indicates that the somewhat repetitive nature of the activities had started to produce the *fatigue effect* by that time. A similar pattern was observed for the treatment focusing on the passive, but here, some students had visibly grown weary of performing the tasks after the third segment, which is perhaps not surprising in view of the fact that, as evident in Table 5.1. above, by that point they had participated in a total of nine sessions (six for the past tense and three for the passive). The subjects constituting a mixed-level group, the distribution of classroom participation was uneven during the treatment segments, with the effect that direct nomination often had to be employed to get the less proficient or assertive learners to make a contribution. As regards the frequency of occurrence of *language related episodes*, defined as occasions on which errors in the use of the targeted structure were followed by a



clarification request and/or a recast, their mean number per treatment stood at 22 for the past tense and 16 for the passive. However, such a difference was predictable and can be easily accounted for in terms of the fact that while the former is necessary to get messages across, the latter can easily be replaced with other structures that may attain the same communicative goal.

Successful uptake was more common in the case of past tense morphology, with 41.9% of incorrect uses being self-repaired compared with 22.3% fixed in response to the first or second corrective move for the passive. Given the fact that few students seemed to have integrated the latter into their implicit systems at the start of the experiment, such a disparity was to be expected, since learners tend to prioritize meaning over form as they engage in meaning-centered comprehension and production (cf. Skehan 1998; VanPatten 2002). It was also clear from the transcripts that irregular past tense verb forms were used much more often than regular ones and, in both categories, some verbs appeared more frequently than others (e.g. 'went', 'had', 'came', 'took', 'started', 'decided', 'wanted'), although no justification for such a phenomenon could be found in the materials. The students were also observed to display a tendency for employing some passive constructions involving some specific verbs more often than others (e.g. 'was bought', 'was taken', 'is situated', 'are sent') which were equally common in the texts they had read and worked with. Although different explanations could perhaps be offered to account for these preferences, the communicative nature of the tasks seems to have resulted in the learners falling back on exemplars they had internalized as separate items and were able to use without excessively stretching their limited attentional resources.

#### 5.1.6. Data collection, coding, scoring and analysis

Three different types of data were collected for the purpose of the study and these were the information obtained by means of the background questionnaire, the audio-recordings of the treatment sessions, and the results of the pretest, immediate and delayed posttests, the last of which were obviously of crucial importance in determining the effect of the intervention. As the discussion in section 5.1.4. illustrated, the main purpose of the questionnaire was to obtain insights into the participants' attitudes, motivations and

the amount of out-of-class exposure, since such factors are instrumental when interpreting the findings of any classroom-oriented research project. Adopting a similar rationale, the tape-recordings served the purpose of verifying that the treatment occurred as planned as well as determining potential differences between instructional segments in terms of such variables as the overall level and distribution of student participation, the frequency of LREs and their outcomes, and the types of verbs most often used. Thus, all the whole-class feedback sessions in each of the 12 segments were audio-taped with the help of two dictaphones placed in different locations in the classroom, transcribed and analyzed. Although, on several occasions, the interactions of groups and pairs were also recorded for comparison purposes, it was a practical impossibility to obtain such data for all the students, and, besides, it was not necessary in the context of the investigation. Since an in-depth exploration of the patterns of corrective feedback was not the concern of the study, the transcripts were mainly analyzed qualitatively and, where quantification was involved, simple numerical statistics was employed. In particular, comparisons were made between the nature of the six treatment sessions for each targeted structure separately as well as between the overall characteristics of the treatment for past tense morphology and the passive. It is the outcomes of these analyses that served as a basis for the comments on the nature of the instructional treatment included at the end of the previous section.

While background information about the subjects and the character of the interactions that transpired during the treatment sessions may facilitate the interpretation of the findings, the research questions listed in section 5.1.2. could only be explored by obtaining a reliable picture of the subjects' knowledge of the targeted features and their ability to use them in free and controlled production prior to the treatment, immediately afterwards as well as after a longer period of time. Therefore, both in the case of past tense morphology and passive constructions, the intervention was preceded by a pretest and followed by one immediate and two delayed posttests, which differed somewhat for the two targeted structures but also shared some important characteristics and were administered in exactly the same manner. Firstly, all the tests comprised two components, one of which was written and required the students to use the given structure in a largely monitored manner, and the other of

which was spoken and aimed to elicit the feature in the course of meaning and message conveyance. It was hoped that the two measures would provide information about the status of the forms in the learners' explicit and implicit TL knowledge, respectively. It should also be noted that both of the tasks were completed by the students in a single lesson, with the written task always following the spoken task to minimize the danger of some items being stored as chunks and transferred to the meaning-focused phase. Secondly, due to practical limitations, such as the difficulty in procuring the required equipment or students' reluctance to be audio-taped, only 16 subjects provided oral data that could be included in the analysis of the use of the forms in unplanned discourse. Although such a situation makes the comparison of monitored and spontaneous performance difficult, the researcher felt it was unethical and pointless to force the learners to take part in the recordings as their negative attitudes could have biased the findings in some way. Thirdly, the utilization of repeated measures made it necessary to carefully consider the nature of the instruments by means which of the data could be collected, and the problem was tackled in similar ways for the past tense and the passive.

Since the application of exactly the same instrument on the pretest and posttests would have inevitably increased the likelihood of the *practice effect*, a confounding variable that could have influenced the results and made their interpretation difficult, a decision was taken to create three different versions of each. Therefore, in the case of each structure, a total of six tasks (or tests) were devised, with three of them aiming at eliciting the written production of the form and allowing a considerable degree of monitoring, and the other three requiring oral and spontaneous use thereof. In effect, two sets of three tasks (or tests), which could be designated as A, B, and C, were employed in the pretest and the three posttests focusing on each of the two targeted structures. Although versions A, B and C necessarily differed to some extent in their content as well as the choice of lexis, the researcher went to great lengths to ensure that they followed exactly the same format, contained identical or very similar contexts for the use of the feature and represented comparable levels of difficulty.

In spite of such precautions, there was still no guarantee that the three versions of each measure were of exactly equal difficulty and, therefore, the following testing scheme was adopted. For the

pretest, one third of the subjects completed version A, the second third worked on version B and the last third were provided with version C. The tasks were shuffled for the immediate posttest, with the students who had worked on version A receiving version B, those pretested with version B being supplied with version C, and those who had completed version C receiving version A. On delayed posttest 1 the tasks were shuffled one more time so that the last possible combination was covered and each participant had taken all the three versions prepared for the written and spoken measure. For delayed posttest 2, the original distribution was restored, with the students completing the same versions of the tasks as they had had in the pretest.<sup>4</sup> The somewhat complex testing procedure is presented in Table 5.2.

	Pretest	Immediate posttest	Delayed posttest 1	Delayed posttest 2
Past tense & Passive	Oral and written measure	Oral and written measure	Oral and written measure	Oral and written measure
	Group 1 (11): A	Group 1 (11): B	Group 1 (11): C	Group 1 (11): A
	Group 2 (11): B	Group 2 (11): C	Group 2 (11): A	Group 2 (11): B
	Group 3 (11): C	Group 3 (11): A	Group 3 (11): B	Group 3 (11): C

Table 5.2. *The distribution of different versions of testing instruments employed on the pretest and the three posttests.*

Now that the testing scheme has been elucidated, it is time to take a closer look at the manner in which the written and spoken measures were administered, and the procedures employed in the

<sup>4</sup> A point could be made that yet another two sets of tasks for each structure should have been devised so that not three but four versions could be shuffled on the pretest and the three posttests. It was the belief of the researcher, however, that the greater the number of versions for each measure, the greater the likelihood that they would differ in some unpredictable ways and unduly influence the results. Besides, given the fact that there was an almost three-month interval between the pretest and the last posttest, it was rather unlikely for the practice effect to be more than negligible. In fact, as the study conducted by Day and Shapson (2001) illustrates, it is not uncommon for researchers to use on the second posttests the same testing instruments as those employed in the pretesting.

coding, scoring and analyzing of the data they yielded. As regards the past tense, the two testing instruments were almost identical in nature and produced samples of the TL that were analyzed in very similar ways. The spoken measure, the data for which were collected from 16 of the 33 subjects, invariably came first and required the learners to complete a focused communication task in which they described their first day in secondary school (Task A), Christmas (Task B) and Easter (Task C) on the basis of a set of prompts in Polish (see Appendix 3). This activity was always performed in dyads which were randomly chosen for the pretest and remained the same for the posttests, with the students being allotted 8-10 minutes for its completion. The interaction of each pair was audio-recorded by means of a dictaphone placed on the desk in front of the students, transcribed and subjected to analyses. This was followed by the written measure in which all the 33 subjects were asked to sit at separate desks, and given a maximum of 10 minutes to write a narrative on the basis of a set of pictures provided (see Appendix 4). In contrast to the oral activity, this task mainly aimed to tap the students' explicit knowledge, but, due to some degree of ingenuity required to come up with a coherent story in the limited time allotted, it may have posed quite a challenge to the weaker students and resulted in their prioritizing meaning in its completion. The selection of such an instrument, however, was dictated by the fact that, being formally and functionally simple, the structure could not profitably be tested by means of selected- or limited-response tasks which most subjects would have probably performed with extremely high accuracy.

The transcripts of the interactions and the narratives generated on the pretest and the posttests were analyzed separately for each subject by means of a combination of quantitative and qualitative procedures. These involved:

- counting the obligatory contexts for the occurrence of the past simple tense of regular and irregular verbs;
- determining the numbers of correct and incorrect uses, with the latter comprising cases of non-suppliance as well as such where the base form of the verb was employed (e.g. 'He wash', 'She break'), the wrong form was used or an inaccurate grammatical marker was added to the verb (e.g. 'She forgotten to lock the door', 'She going'), or the wrong tense

or aspect was applied (e.g. 'She was going' instead of 'She went');<sup>5</sup>

- calculating accuracy percentages by dividing the number of accurate forms by the overall number of obligatory contexts;
- determining the number of interlanguage forms (e.g. 'He brokeed');
- tabulating instances of inaccuracies that could be regarded as having resulted from the overgeneralization of the past tense forms, attributable to the instructional treatment provided (e.g. 'She will went to a new job next May');
- counting the subjects' self- and peer-corrections, the former of which were additionally subdivided into successful and unsuccessful ones;
- qualitatively exploring the types of verbs most frequently used by the learners as well as cases of intra-learner variation in their oral and written productions.

Since the data in some of the categories were not normally distributed, the *nonparametric Wilcoxon matched pairs signed ranks test* was utilized to assess the significance of the differences in the subjects' performance on different tests.

Turning our attention to the passive, the written and spoken testing instruments differed considerably and they were also analyzed in quite disparate ways. As was the case with the past tense, the oral task took 8-10 minutes, it always preceded the written task and involved the students performing a focused communication activity which required the application of various passive constructions to describe a specific place on the basis of the prompts supplied. The major difference between this task and the oral measure for the past tense lay in the fact that although the instructions were in Polish, the prompts themselves were in English, and they provided clear-cut contexts for the use of the passive, a solution that was viewed as necessary in the light of the fact that this

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<sup>5</sup> Obviously, it is also possible to envisage other ways in which students can be inaccurate in their use of the past tense, the prime example being the use of the present or past form of the verb 'to be' with a base or inflected form of the main verb, as in 'She is went to school'. However, no such errors were found in the data, which can perhaps be attributed to the fact that the vast majority of the subjects were far beyond the elementary level of proficiency.

structure is much more complex and can easily be replaced with other TL forms. Since, as corroborated by subsequent analyses, some learners still resorted to avoidance strategies (e.g. saying 'They painted the house' instead of 'The house was painted'), such a decision proved to be fully warranted and had it not been taken, the requirement for task-essentialness or even task-utility (Loschky and Bley-Vroman 1993) might have been impossible to satisfy. On each occasion, the members of a pair were provided with work cards which comprised some facts about a house (Task A), a hotel (Task B) and a university (Task C), they were requested to exchange the information adding any other details they deemed relevant and, in the last step, decided which of the places would be more suitable for both of them (see Appendix 5).

Although the activity was completed by all the learners in regularly-scheduled lessons, in order to make subsequent comparisons more meaningful, the data were collected from the same 16 subjects as in the case of the past tense, with the same 8 dyads being audio-taped. The recording was made by means of dictaphones set in front of the learners, their interactions were transcribed and subjected to a combination of quantitative and qualitative analyses akin to those conducted on the data for the past tense. In effect, the following procedures were performed on the transcripts obtained on the pretest and the posttests, with individual students constituting the units of analysis:

- the number of obligatory contexts for the suppliance of the passive was determined;
- the number of accurate uses was tabulated and accuracy percentages were established;
- the occurrences of the inaccurate uses of the targeted feature were counted, such uses being understood as the employment of the base or inflected verb form without the verb 'to be' (e.g. 'The hotel redecorated', 'The university visit', 'The place can seen'), as well as the use of this auxiliary with inflected verb forms other than those for the past tense or past participle (e.g. 'The hotel was visiting');
- the number of emergent IL forms was determined, with this category comprising cases where the incorrect form of 'to be' was employed (e.g. 'The walls was painted'), the base form or an incorrect past participle was used (e.g. 'The hotel has been redecorate', 'A shopping center will be build'), or the tense

and aspect selected were inappropriate but would have allowed the interlocutor to recover the intended meaning (e.g. 'At the moment preparations are made' or 'It is visited by tourists for a long time');

- the number of overgeneralization errors that could be traced back to the passive was tabulated (e.g. 'Somebody should be repaired this house');
- the occurrences of self-corrections and peer-corrections were counted, with the former being broken down into instances of successful and unsuccessful repair;
- qualitative procedures were applied to explore the types of passives most frequently employed and the specific verb forms the subjects were most likely to use, as well as to assess the extent of variation in the output of individual learners.

Since the data for some of the categories being compared were not normally distributed, also in this case, the *nonparametric Wilcoxon matched pairs signed ranks test* was used to evaluate the statistical significance of the differences between the pretest and posttests.

Because it is difficult to devise a relatively open-ended written task that would lead to the employment of different passive constructions, a decision was made to create a test that would provide information about the extent to which the students' explicit knowledge was affected by the FFI. It was administered to all the 33 subjects immediately after they had performed the oral task and they were given 20 minutes for its completion. Each of the three versions of the test (A, B, C) consisted of three separate components which supplied the subjects with Polish instructions and required them to: (1) transform sentences from active to passive voice, (2) complete gaps in a passage with the correct passive forms of verbs in parentheses, and (3) fill in a series of sentences with appropriate passive forms of their own choice to come up with a coherent text (see Appendix 6). As had been expected by the researcher and was confirmed in the subsequent analysis, the last part was the most demanding as its format forced the subjects to simultaneously attend to the three dimensions of form, meaning and use. The reliability estimate for the three versions of this measure was established on the basis of the pretest results by means of Cronbach alpha and the value obtained was entirely satisfactory ( $\alpha = .91$ ).



The maximum score for each version was 78 points and it was possible to obtain from one to three points for each item. Although this decision could be regarded as somewhat controversial, it was dictated by the formal and functional complexity of the passive as well as the researcher's desire to give credit to the subjects' interlanguage development and obtain insights into this process. Consequently, the tests were scored as follows:

- three points were awarded for a response that was accurate with regard to its form and use in a particular context, the only exception being minor spelling errors that did not influence the meaning of the sentence;
- two points were given when the passive was used but there was a *single* inaccuracy in its form (e.g. 'The house were built' or 'The house was build', but not the two errors at the same time), or there was a problem with tense or aspect that did not change the overall meaning (e.g. 'The car was repaired lately');
- an item received one point when a passive construction was used but the form of both the 'to be' element and the past participle was inaccurate in some way (e.g. 'The cost of the repairs are kepted a secret'), a problem with tense/aspect was accompanied by a structural error (e.g. 'The thief weren't caught so far'), or the form appeared to be accurate but the lexical item used made the sentence difficult to understand (e.g. 'The puppy has been given a lot of new tricks');
- no points were awarded in cases where no form was supplied, the structure provided was not passive (e.g. 'The Mona Lisa painted by Leonardo da Vinci', 'The money is spending'), or it contained more than two errors such as those described above.

Since the scores on the pretest and the three posttests were normally distributed and the standard deviations were comparable, *t-tests for matched samples* were computed to assess the significance of the differences between different measurements.

Although it was the researcher who scored these tests and coded the past tense narratives and the transcripts of the interactions on the oral tasks for both features, a calibration check was made by one of his colleagues. She was requested to mark a randomly selected sample of the data obtained by means of each of the four measures (i.e. two for the past tense and two for the

passive) on both the pretests and the three posttests in accordance with the guidelines described above. The comparison of the marking of the data served as a basis for determining interrater reliabilities which were quite high in all cases, as evidenced by the fact that the lowest value of Pearson Correlation Coefficient equaled .976. To control for intrarater reliability over the four occasions on which the data were scored or coded (i.e. the pretest and the three posttests), the researcher rescored a sample of data randomly chosen from each of the pretest measures with the immediate posttests, a randomly chosen sample of data obtained by means of immediate posttest instruments with delayed posttest 1, and exactly the same procedure was followed with delayed posttests 1 and 2. The intrarater reliabilities calculated on this basis were also quite high, with Pearson Correlation Coefficient at 0.982 or higher.

#### 5.1.7. Results

For the sake of clarity, the results of the study are presented separately for the past tense and the passive, with comparisons between the two being made in a separate discussion section. The order in which the findings are handled roughly matches the one in which the research questions were listed in section 5.1.2., although several additional issues which emerged in the process of coding and analyzing the data are also mentioned and elaborated upon where deemed relevant and appropriate. For both features, the subjects' performance on the spoken measure is discussed first with respect to each research area as this was the order in which the tasks were applied during the experimental classes and discussed in the preceding section.

##### 5.1.7.1. Past tense morphology

Figure 5.1. below shows the medians for the numbers of obligatory occasions for the use of the past simple tense, as well as the accurate and inaccurate uses of the structure for the oral task on the pretest (Pre), the immediate (IPost) and two delayed posttests (DPost 1 and DPost 2, respectively). Even a cursory look at this figure and the numerical information presented in Table 5.3. shows that the 16 students who participated in the communicative task and provided the data for subsequent analyses used the target structure much

more frequently on all three posttests, with the greatest and statistically significant gain on the immediate posttest in comparison with the pretest (9.5,  $W = 12$ ,  $p < .01$ ).<sup>6</sup> Even though the median dropped by 4.5 from the immediate posttest to delayed posttest 1 ( $W = 105$ ,  $p < .01$ ), it still remained considerably higher than on the pretest, and rose again on delayed posttest 2, with the Pre-DPost 2 difference equaling 9 and reaching statistical significance ( $W = 10$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

The growth in the number of obligatory contexts was accompanied by an increase in the median for the targetlike uses, which was also higher on all the posttests and eventually reached the value over twice as high as the original number, with the difference between the pretest and delayed posttest 2 amounting to 11 and being highly statistically significant ( $W = 1.5$ ,  $p < .01$ ). As was the case with the obligatory contexts of suppliance, there was a drop in the IPost-DPost 1 median for this category, but it was relatively small (2.5), not statistically significant ( $W = 103.5$ ,  $p < .07$ ), and it can perhaps be ascribed to the less frequent use of the past simple on this task rather than a dramatic change in the overall tendency. As for the median for the non-targetlike uses of the feature, it decreased by just 0.5 on the IPost, but continued to drop on DPost 1 and DPost 2, with the differences standing at 2 and 1.5, respectively, and revealing statistical significance ( $W = 86$ ,  $p < .04$ ). When it comes to the occurrence interlanguage past tense forms such as 'broke', only one instance thereof was coded in the transcripts, and, thus, no separate category is included in Figure 5.1.

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<sup>6</sup> A few words of explanation are in order as to the interpretation of the nature of change between the medians and accuracy percentages reported in Table 5.5. Since the table is quite complicated in its present form and adding additional information could have made the data even more difficult to interpret, a decision was made to focus on the differences between the pretest, immediate posttest and delayed posttest 2 in this respect. Thus, when there was an increase from the pretest to the immediate posttest and the gain was carried over into delayed posttest 2, an assumption was made that it had been maintained irrespective of the decreases which may have occurred on delayed posttest 1.

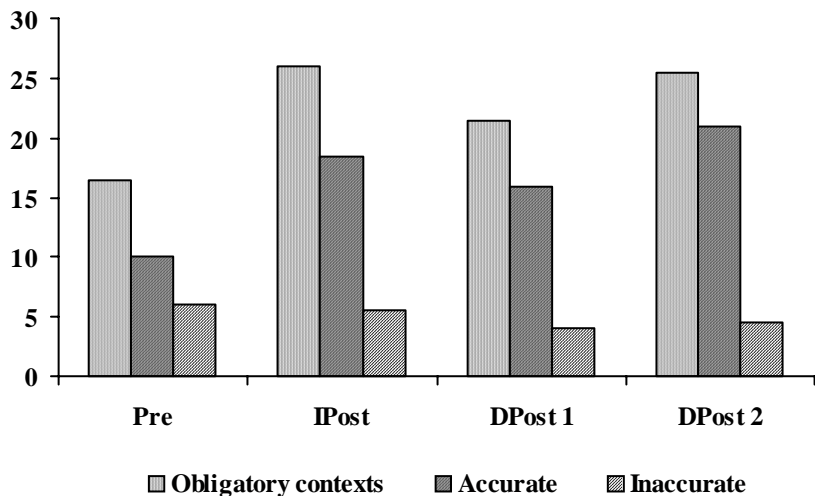


Figure 5.1. The medians for the numbers of obligatory contexts, accurate and inaccurate uses of the past tense on the oral measure.

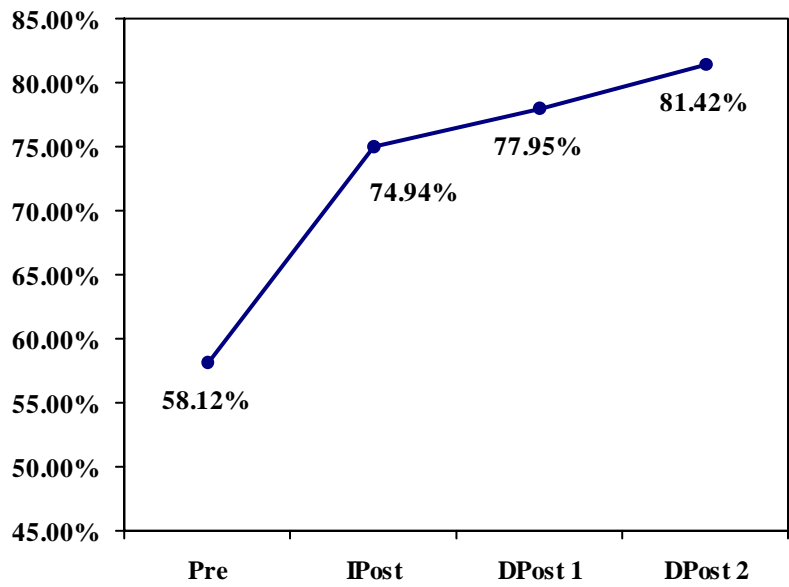


Figure 5.2. Accuracy percentages for the use of the past tense on the oral task.

Obviously, although the existence of significant differences in the medians for the total number of the obligatory contexts for the suppliance of the past tense and its accurate uses may be indicative of the subjects' superior performance over time, a much more complete picture in this respect can only be obtained by looking at the accuracy percentages in the four oral tasks that were used in the pre- and posttesting. As illustrated in Figure 5.2., these findings are largely in line with the data on the frequency of occurrence of past tense forms, with the accuracy percentage increasing by an astounding 16.82% from the pretest to the immediate posttest, which constitutes a huge and statistically significant gain ( $W = 12, p < .01$ ). What is more, the initial advantage was not only carried over into the subsequent posttests, but the subjects' performance continued to improve over time, as is visible from the accuracy ratio increasing by 3.01% from IPost to DPost 1 and a further 3.47% from DPost 1 to DPost 2. Even though these gains did not prove to be statistically significant ( $W = 58, p = .63$  and  $W = 43, p = .21$ , respectively), they are clearly indicative of the tendency for the subjects to be consistently more accurate in their use of the feature, an assumption that finds support in the fact that their performance on delayed posttests 1 and 2 was superior to that on the pretest (an increase of 19.83% and 23.30%, respectively), with the differences reaching statistical significance ( $W = 14, p < .01$  for DPost1 and  $W = 10, p < .01$  for DPost 2).

Category	Pretest	IPost	DPost 1	DPost 2	Nature of change	Significance (two-tailed Wilcoxon test)
						(a) Pre → IPost (b) IPost → DPost 1 (c) Pre → DPost 1 (d) DPost 1 → DPost 2 (e) Pre → DPost 2
Oral measure (n = 16)						
Obligatory contexts median	16.5	26	21.5	25.5	Gain, partly maintained	(a) $W = 12, p < .01$ (b) $W = 105, p < .01$ (c) $W = 40, p = .16$ n.s. (d) $W = 0, p < .01$ (e) $W = 10, p < .01$
Accurate uses median	10	18.5	16	21	Gain, maintained (increased)	(a) $W = 6, p < .01$ (b) $W = 103.5, p = .07$ n.s. (c) $W = 12.5, p < .01$ (d) $W = 0, p < .01$ (e) $W = 1.5, p < .01$

Inaccurate uses median	6	5.5	4	4.5	Loss, maintained (increased)	(a) $W = 70, p = .30$ n.s. (b) $W = 62, p = .08$ n.s. (c) $W = 86, p = .04$ (d) $W = 38, p = .64$ n.s. (e) $W = 86, p = .04$
Accuracy percentage	58.12%	74.94%	77.95%	81.42%	Gain, maintained (increased)	(a) $W = 12, p < .01$ (b) $W = 58, p < .63$ n.s. (c) $W = 14, p < .01$ (d) $W = 43, p = .21$ n.s. (e) $W = 10, p < .01$
<i>Written measure (n = 33)</i>						
Obligatory contexts median	11	14	15	19	Gain, maintained (increased)	(a) $W = 66.5, p < .01$ (b) $W = 247, p = .52$ n.s. (c) $W = 96.5, p < .01$ (d) $W = 2.5, p < .01$ (e) $W = 7.5, p < .01$
Accurate uses median	9	13	13	16	Gain, maintained (increased)	(a) $W = 33, p < .01$ (b) $W = 251, p = .27$ n.s. (c) $W = 64, p < .01$ (d) $W = 4.5, p < .01$ (e) $W = 3, p < .01$
Inaccurate uses median	2	1	1	2	Loss, not maintained	(a) $W = 246, p = .02$ (b) $W = 97, p = .07$ n.s. (c) $W = 168.5, p < .17$ n.s. (d) $W = 67, p = .03$ (e) $W = 105, p = .71$ n.s.
Accuracy percentage	80.33%	91.39%	88.63%	88.47%	Gain, maintained (increased)	(a) $W = 23.5, p < .01$ (b) $W = 329.5, p = .03$ (c) $W = 89, p < .01$ (d) $W = 204, p = 0.77$ n.s. (e) $W = 62.5, p < .01$
<i>Written measure (n = 16)</i>						
Accuracy percentage	84.75%	90.83%	90.27%	90.23%	Gain, maintained (increased)	(a) $W = 15, p < .01$ (b) $W = 58, p = .41$ n.s. (c) $W = 25, p = .09$ n.s. (d) $W = 47, p = .76$ n.s. (e) $W = 22, p = .03$

*Table 5.3. The effect of the instructional treatment on the students' use of the past tense on the oral and written measure.*

The situation looked slightly different in the case of the written measure, as is evidenced by the numerical data included in Table 5.3. and the graphical representations of the medians and accuracy percentages in Figures 5.3. and 5.4., respectively. In the first place, it is quite clear that the subjects produced considerably fewer exemplars of the past tense in writing than in speech, which is best visible in the fact that the medians for the numbers of contexts

in which the use of the form was required were lower for the written measure on the pretest and the three posttests. More precisely, the mean difference between the two sets of four medians amounted to 7.63, which indicates that each transcript of a particular subject's output contained on average almost eight more obligatory contexts for the use of the past tense than his or her narrative. This finding can be explained in terms of the greater ease of producing spoken discourse as well as the fact that the narratives that were to be written on the basis of pictures could have been more challenging in terms of their content and the requirement for the use of specific lexis than interaction on familiar topics.

As was the case with the oral task, the subjects used the past tense more often on the posttests than on the pretest, but here the tendency is more pronounced, with the number of obligatory contexts increasing on each successive test and the differences between the pretest and the three posttests standing at 3, 4 and 8, respectively, and always reaching statistical significance ( $W = 66.5$ ,  $p < .01$  for IPost,  $W = 96.5$ ,  $p < .01$  for DPost 1 and  $W = 7.5$ ,  $p < .01$  for DPost 2). A very similar pattern could be observed for the occurrence of targetlike uses, the only exception being that the median for the immediate posttest and delayed posttest 1 was the same (13). Nonetheless, the students were consistent in producing more accurate past tense morphology over time and used, on average, 7 more correct forms on the last posttest in comparison with the pretest, which also constitutes a statistically significant difference ( $W = 3$ ,  $p < .01$ ). In contrast to the oral measure, the fluctuations in the median for the number of inaccurate uses were small even in cases where they proved to be statistically significant, and there was no difference between the pretest and delayed posttest 2 in this respect. As regards interlanguage past tense forms, only two such instances were coded in the narratives (one on the pretest and one on the immediate posttest) and, therefore, similarly to the oral task, they were not entered as a separate category in the median summary in Figure 5.3.

The differences become much more striking when it comes to the changes in the relative accuracy with which the subjects used the past tense on the pretest and the three posttests, defined as the ratio of the correct uses of the feature and the number of obligatory contexts for its suppliance. Although, in this case, the accuracy percentage also increased from the pretest to the immediate posttest

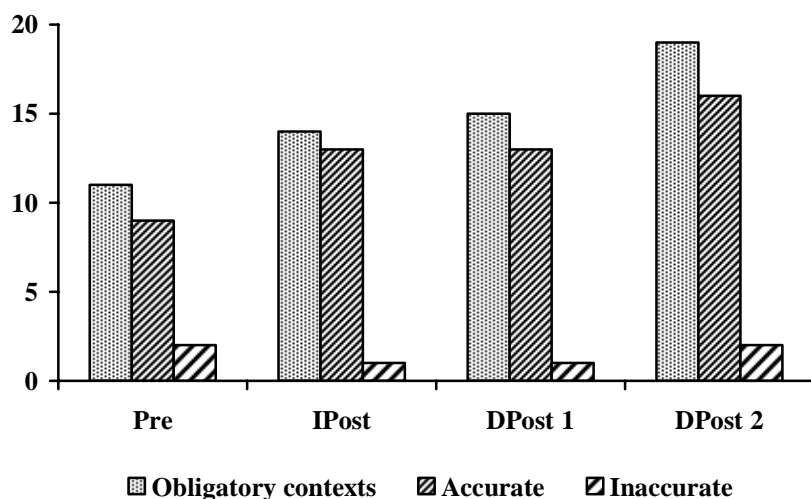
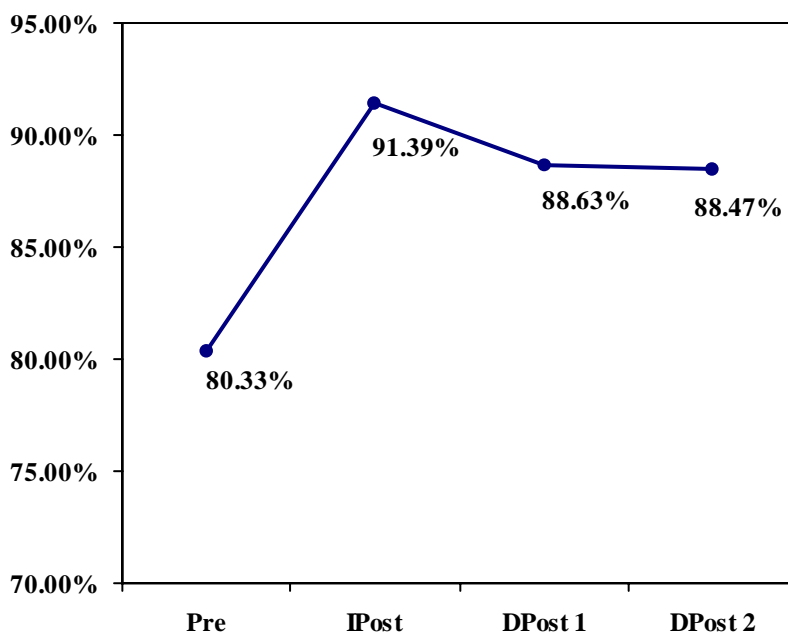


Figure 5.3. The medians for the numbers of obligatory contexts, accurate and inaccurate uses of the past tense on the written measure.

and the difference was statistically significant ( $W = 2.53$ ,  $p < .01$ ), the gain was somewhat more modest than on the oral task and amounted to 11.06%. More importantly, in stark contrast to the focused communication task used to measure the subjects' ability to deploy the targeted feature in spontaneous speech, not only were there no further increases in the accuracy percentage following the first posttest, but, in fact, it decreased by 2.76% on delayed posttest 1 ( $W = 329.5$ ,  $p = .03$ ) and a further 0.16% ( $W = 204$ ,  $p = .77$ ) on delayed posttest 2. Even though the decrease was small and the Pre-DPost 2 gain still equaled 8.14% and revealed statistical significance ( $W = 62.5$ ,  $p < .01$ ), it was just around a third of the Pre-DPost 2 gain on the oral measure, which is clearly indicative of the predominant trends on the two tasks. At the same time, however, it should be pointed out that the initial accuracy percentage for the written task was 22.21% higher than for the oral task, which left relatively little room for subsequent improvement.

When comparing the accuracy percentages on the oral and written task which are shown in Figures 5.2. and 5.4., respectively, and listed in the first two sections of Table 5.3., it should be kept in mind that they are not fully equivalent since, in the case of each test,





*Figure 5.4. Accuracy percentages for the use of the past tense on the written task.*

the data for the former came from the audio-recordings of the 16 students working in dyads whereas those for the latter were obtained from all the 33 subjects who wrote the picture-based narratives. Therefore, it seems warranted or even necessary to examine the performance on the two tasks of only those 16 students in the two groups who provided both spoken and written data for the analysis. As illustrated by Figure 5.5., which provides a graphical representation of the accuracy percentages for the 16 subjects on both the oral and written measure, as well as the numerical summary thereof provided in the last row of Table 5.3., the overall tendency on the written task was very similar to that displayed by the class as a whole, but there were also some differences. For one thing, the accuracy percentage was slightly higher on the pretest (84.75% vs. 80.33%) and somewhat lower on the immediate posttest (90.83% vs. 91.39%), with the effect that the initial advantage for this group (6.08%) was not as evident as for all the 33 subjects (11.06%) and it

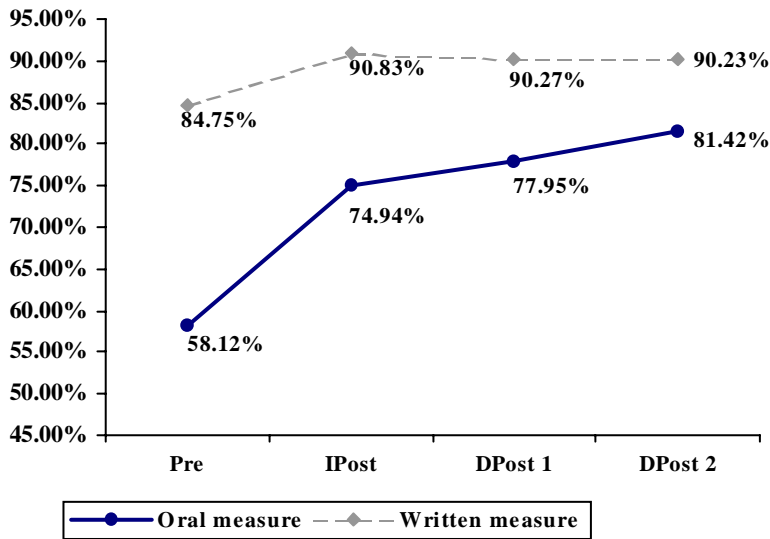


Figure 5.5. Accuracy percentages for the oral and written tasks for the students who provided both types of data ( $n = 16$ ).

was in fact 4.98% smaller. However, the gain was also much more durable in this case as it was carried over almost intact into the two delayed posttests, producing a Pre-DPost 2 difference that was sizable (5.48%) as well as statistically significant ( $W = 22.5$ ,  $p = .03$ ). As regards the comparison of the performance of the 16 subjects on the oral and written measures, it seems clear that the initially wide gap in the accuracy percentages which stood at 26.63% on the pretest consistently diminished on each consecutive test to drop to just 8.81% on delayed posttest 2. This could be interpreted as indicating that the treatment had a more beneficial impact on the subjects' implicit knowledge, although some alternative explanations will also be offered in the discussion of the findings.

As mentioned above, the subjects' awareness of the target structure was operationalized as their ability to monitor their own speech as well as the output of their peers. For obvious reasons, it was the oral measure that provided the relevant data for this type of analysis, the outcomes of which are presented in Table 5.4. Even though, given the relatively short duration of the task, the number of self-corrections was quite high (17) on the pretest, it increased

<i>Oral task (n = 16)</i>				
	Pretest	Immediate posttest	Delayed posttest 1	Delayed posttest 2
self-corrections	17	39 <sup>1</sup>	34	49 <sup>1</sup>
<i>successful</i>	9	32 <sup>1</sup>	27 <sup>1</sup>	38 <sup>1</sup>
<i>unsuccessful</i>	8	7	7	11
peer-corrections	0	6	6	3
<i>successful</i>	0	6	6	3
<i>unsuccessful</i>	0	0	0	0
overgeneralization errors	2	2	3	11 <sup>1 2 3</sup>
<i>Written task (n = 33)</i>				
	Pretest	Immediate posttest	Delayed posttest 1	Delayed Posttest 2
overgeneralization errors	1	6	3	13 <sup>1 3</sup>

\* The number in the upper index indicates the presence of a statistically significant difference between successive tests with  $p < .05$ ; significance levels assessed by means of a two-tailed Wilcoxon test; 1 stands for the comparison with the pretest, 2 with the immediate posttest and 3 with delayed posttest 1.

*Table 5.4. Self-corrections, peer-corrections and overgeneralizations on the oral and written task.*

more than twofold on the immediate posttest (39). Then, it dropped slightly on delayed posttest 1 (34) only to rise again on delayed posttest 2 (49), and was eventually almost three times as big as at the outset, a difference that was highly statistically significant ( $W = 3.5$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Even more revealing is the fact that a very similar trend obtained for the instances of successful self-repair, but, in this case, the Pre-IPost gain was even greater (9 as apposed to 32) and the students were eventually able to change their output in the direction of the target language more than four times as often on as on the pretest (9 as opposed to 38), with all the differences reaching acceptable levels of statistical significance ( $W = 3$ ,  $p < .01$  for Pre-IPost,  $W = 10.5$ ,  $p = .03$  for Pre-DPost 1, and  $W = 0$ ,  $p < .01$  for Pre-DPost 2). By contrast, the number of unsuccessful self-corrections, understood as situations where the efforts undertaken by the learners were futile and the form they ultimately produced was non-targetlike (e.g. 'We buy ah we bought ... we buy a lot of food'), remained almost the

same from the pretest to delayed posttest 1, and, although it increased slightly on the final posttest, the change was rather small and statistically insignificant. As for peer-correction, it never occurred on the pretest, there were six instances thereof on both the immediate posttest and delayed posttest 1, and the number fell by half on the last posttest. Despite this decrease as well as the fact that the gains did not reach statistical significance, the results are indicative of an overall positive tendency, particularly in the light of the fact that repair of this kind was always successful and invariably led to the correct form being incorporated by the student who committed the error.

Another area that the researcher set about investigating, this time with the help of data derived from both the oral and written measure, was the incidence of overgeneralization errors that could be attributed to the intensive exposure to and use of past tense forms. As can be seen from Table 5.4., in the case of the subjects' spoken output, the overextension of the rules for past tense morphology was extremely rare on the pretest and the first two posttests, and only on delayed posttest 2 was it possible to observe a sizeable and statistically significant increase in their occurrence ( $W = 0$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The situation was very similar on the written task, the only difference being a larger number of overgeneralization errors on the immediate posttest, which, however, can be attributed to the greater length of the students' narratives and the greater frequency in the use of past tense forms. In fact, the same explanation could be offered for the high incidence of such errors on delayed posttest 2, where the most past tense forms were generated, although it does not apply to the oral measure since the median for the number of obligatory contexts on the final test was smaller than that on the immediate posttest in this case (see Figures 5.1. and 5.3. above).

The subjects' interactions in dyads and the stories they wrote also served as a basis for exploring their lexical choices in the use of verbs, which was intended to provide an indicator of the extent to which the accuracy gains were the outcome of item learning and system learning. Qualitative analysis of all the 16 transcripts and 33 narratives demonstrated quite convincingly that some lexical items were used much more often than others, with such past tense forms as 'had', 'took', 'went', 'came', 'met', 'asked', 'wanted', 'watched', 'decided' or 'stayed' appearing with very high frequency in the data. It must be admitted, though, that there was a lot of variation

between the subjects in this respect, and there were both compositions or transcripts where just a few most common verbs could be found as well as such where a wide variety of different past tense forms could be pinpointed. Not surprisingly, the vast majority of the former were produced by the least advanced students whereas most of the latter were generated by the most proficient ones, but even in this area several exceptions could be found.

Although it is not the main concern of this research project, it is also worth pointing out that, on the whole, irregular verbs were employed roughly twice as frequently as regular ones irrespective of the mode in which the output was produced, which corroborates the research findings mentioned in passing earlier in this chapter (e.g. Klein, Dietrich and Noyau 1995b; Salaberry 2000). A particularly interesting observation was that the accuracy percentages for the two categories of verbs differed considerably for the oral and written task, with the students always being more accurate in the use of the irregular forms on the former (76.14% for irregular verbs as opposed to 67.14% for regular ones) and the reverse holding for the latter (85.73% for irregular verbs and 88.93% for regular ones). Even though the accuracy percentages changed considerably from the pretest to delayed posttest 2 on both measures, the overall distribution of correct forms remained largely constant, a finding which is consistent with Salaberry's (2000: 140) assumption that "the endings that require the use of rules demand more attention, whereas irregular forms may be stored as lexical elements and will be less affected by processing time".

Given the fact that the students who participated in the research project represented quite heterogeneous levels of proficiency, it could be expected that they would benefit from the instructional treatment to varying degrees and, therefore, it was fully warranted to explore inter-subject variability on the pretest and the posttests. As illustrated by Figure 5.6., which diagrammatically presents the accuracy percentages for each of the 16 subjects for the oral measure on the pretest and the three posttests, the learners varied considerably in their ability to use past tense forms in a targetlike manner prior to the instructional treatment, and such differences did not disappear either immediately after the pedagogic intervention or in the long run. At the same time, however, the plots included in the diagram as well as the ranges and standard deviations on the pretest and posttests presented in Table 5.5. clearly indicate

that the gap between the highest and lowest accuracy percentages differed to a considerable extent on the four tests, with the students performing in a much more homogenous fashion on the immediate posttest and delayed posttest 2 than on the pretest and delayed posttest 1.

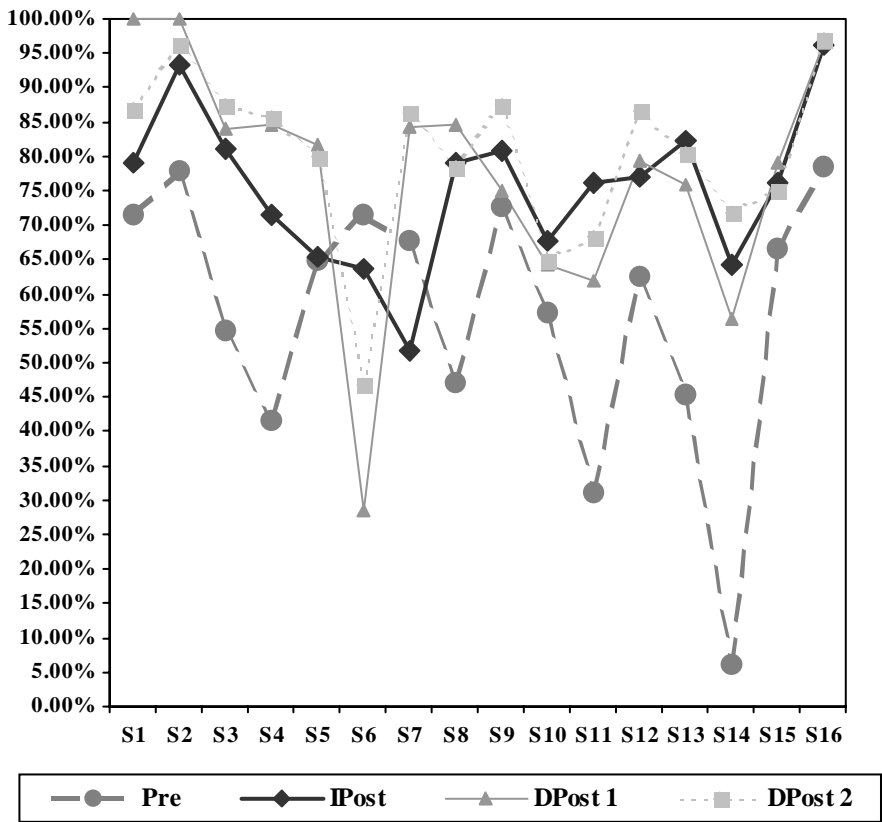


Figure 5.6. Accuracy percentages for individual subjects on the oral task ( $n = 16$ ).

	Pretest	Immediate posttest	Delayed posttest 1	Delayed posttest 2
Range	72.32	44.30	71.43	50.30
Standard deviation	19.27	11.20	17.98	12.66

Table 5.5. Ranges and standard deviations for the pretest and the posttests on the oral task ( $n = 16$ ).

A closer investigation of Figure 5.5., however, shows that the greater inter-subject variation on delayed posttest 1 can mainly be ascribed to a dramatic decrease in the performance of S6 whose accuracy percentage continued to drop after the pretest and rose only very slightly on the last posttest. In fact, this was a rather weak student who created very few contexts for the use of the targeted structure, with the effect that the occurrence of two or three errors resulted in such wide fluctuations in her overall performance. Thus, it could be claimed that had this subject not provided the data for the analysis, the overall trend would have been towards greater homogeneity of performance on the posttests, as evidenced by less disparity in the accuracy percentages of individual learners. It is also comforting that, with the exception of S6, all the other participants tended to improve over time, and, ultimately, all of them did considerably better on delayed posttest 2 than on the pretest, which may speak not only to the effectiveness of instruction but also to its contribution to diminishing inter-subject variation.

Similar conclusions can be reached on the basis of the analysis of the accuracy percentages for the individual students on the written measure, which is evidenced by the plots in Figure 5.7. as well as the values of the measures of dispersion included in Table 5.6. In fact, in this case, the situation is even more clear-cut since the range was lower on each successive posttest and, although there was an increase in standard deviation on delayed posttest 1, the trend towards diminished variation between the subjects is quite pronounced. Obviously, also in this case, there were two students (S22 and S28) whose performance deteriorated from the pretest to delayed posttest 2, or such who did worse on one of the following posttests (e.g. S6, S11, etc.). On most occasions, however, the initial scores of these students were very high and sometimes even maximum, with the effect that a single mistake could have resulted in a seemingly significant drop in the overall accuracy percentage. It should also be pointed out that the instruction appeared to have been particularly beneficial for the students who did worst on the pretest, as is reflected in the spectacular Pre-IPost gains some of them managed to make (e.g. S9, S13, S18).

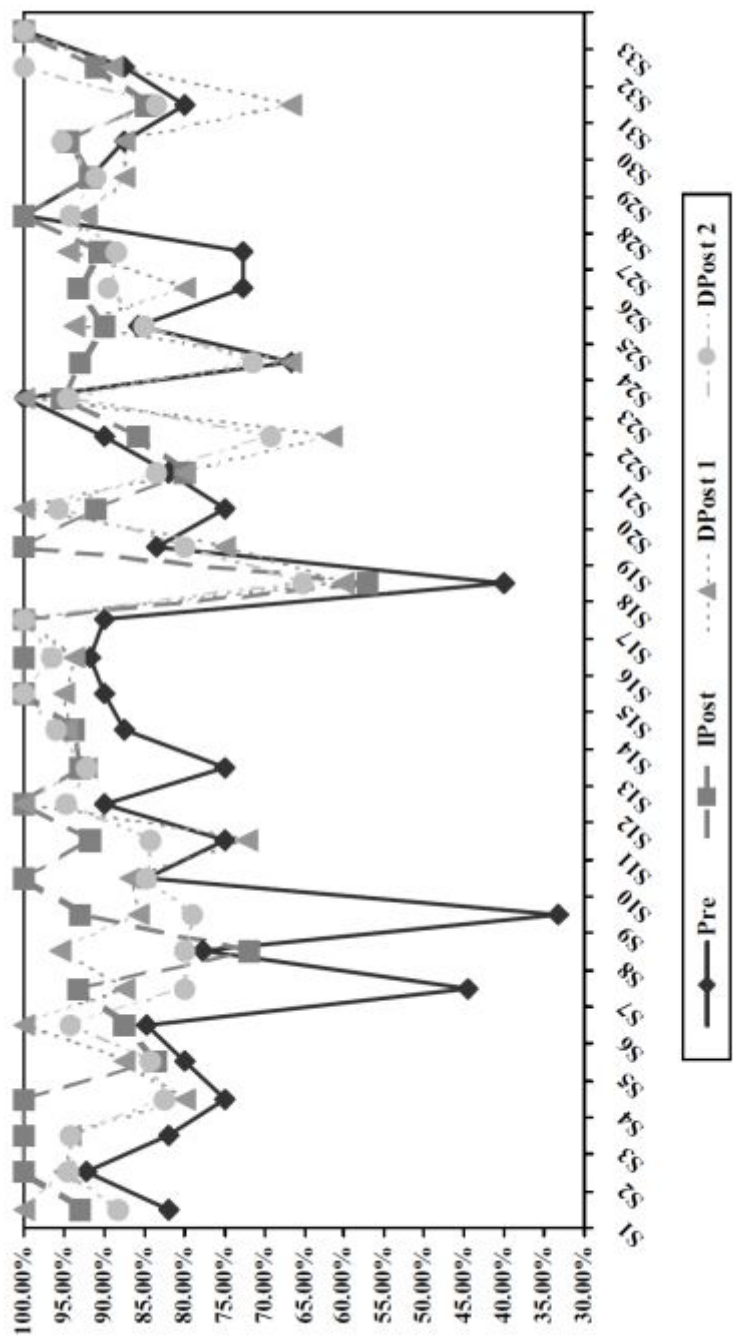


Figure 5.7. Accuracy percentages for individual subjects on the written task ( $n = 33$ ).



	Pretest	Immediate posttest	Delayed posttest 1	Delayed posttest 2
Range	66.67	42.86	40.00	35.00
Standard deviation	15.53	9.16	11.72	9.09

*Table 5.6. Ranges and standard deviations for the pretest and posttests on the written task (n = 33).*

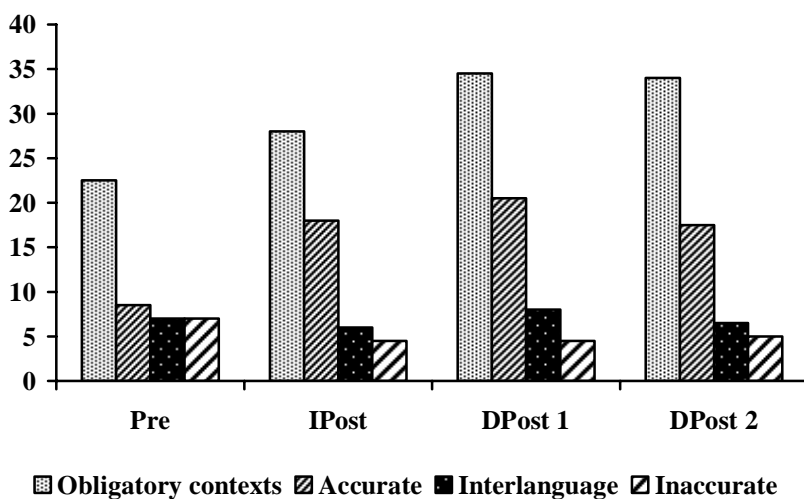
At the close of this section, a few comments are in order on the incidence of intra-learner variability, which was investigated qualitatively both on the basis of the transcripts of the interactions in the 8 dyads performing the oral task and the written data provided by all the 33 subjects. Since this phenomenon is more likely to occur in spontaneous rather than controlled language use, as representative of the *informal* and *careful style* (Tarone 1983) or *unplanned* and *planned discourse* (Ellis 1994), respectively, it was predicted that it would be more common in the students' oral output, an assumption that found some support in the data. Although there were some cases of intra-learner variability in the narratives, these were rather rare and confined to a handful of weaker students, which can perhaps be attributed to the greater ease of access to explicit knowledge in the performance of this task, the opportunity to go over the narrative and correct the mistakes, and, as a result, the relatively high accuracy percentages on this measure on both the pretest and the posttests.<sup>7</sup> The analysis of the transcripts of the students' interactions on the oral task yielded more instances of such variation, as exemplified by situations in which regular and irregular verb forms were appropriately marked for past tense reference only to be used incorrectly in a subsequent turn, and incorrect forms were later replaced with correct ones. Nonetheless, such instances were not as frequent as expected, they were not evenly distributed between all the subjects, in some cases they could be interpreted as self-corrections, and, not surprisingly, they gradually became rarer as the students improved their performance from one

<sup>7</sup> Although the issue of students' self-repairing their written output was not formally investigated in the study, it was obvious from the crossing outs and corrections in their narratives that at least some of the subjects must have reread the texts and made adjustments to erroneous past tense forms.

posttest to the next. It is interesting to note that even though the subjects apparently self-monitored their speech (e.g. thinking for a while about the form they were about to produce) on the oral task, they mainly did so more often on the pretest than the posttests, they primarily resorted to this strategy when fumbling for appropriate words and phrases, and, on the whole, their contributions were quite fluent, which may indicate that they mostly relied on their implicit knowledge.

#### 5.1.7.2. Passive voice

As can be seen from the graphical representation in Figure 5.8. and the numerical data included in Table 5.7., there were considerable differences between the incidence and types of uses of the passive voice by the 16 subjects on the oral pretest and the three posttests. In the first place, it is clear from the changes in the median that the students created many more obligatory contexts for the suppliance of the targeted structure after the provision of the instructional treatment than prior to it. More precisely, the median increased by a total of 12 on the first two posttests ( $W = 7, p < .01$  and  $W = 0, p < .01$ , respectively) and although it fell slightly on delayed posttest 2 (34), it was still much higher than on the pretest (22.5) and the difference was highly statistically significant ( $W = 0, p < .01$ ). Even more optimistically, the greater incidence of contexts which required the use of the passive translated into a greater number of targetlike rather than non-targetlike or interlanguage uses of the structure, which is evidenced by the fact that all the posttest medians were higher in comparison with the pretest and the differences revealed statistical significance ( $W = 0, p < .01$  for Pre-IPost, Pre-DPost 1 and Pre-DPost 2). At the same time, however, the median on DPost 2 (17.5) was lower when compared with DPost 1 (20.5) and, although the difference did not reach statistical significance ( $W = 69.5, p = .33$ ), it could be viewed as an indicator of a reversal in the growth trend that could have perhaps been better captured if further posttests had been administered.



*Figure 5.8. The medians for the numbers of obligatory contexts, accurate, interlanguage and inaccurate uses of the passive voice on the oral measure.*

This assumption also finds partial support in the fact that, having been statistically significantly lower on the immediate posttest and delayed posttest 1 ( $W = 121$ ,  $p < .01$  and  $W = 110$ ,  $p < .01$ , respectively), the median for the number of incorrect uses increased slightly on the last posttest. Even though the initial difference had been largely retained on delayed posttest 2 (7 as opposed to 5), it was no longer sufficiently high to reach statistical significance ( $W = 66.5$ ,  $p = .17$ ) and there are grounds to assume that the number of incorrect uses would have grown further in the course of time. In comparison with the oral task aimed at eliciting past tense forms and discussed in the preceding section, the focused communication task requiring the use of the passive resulted in the students producing substantial numbers of interlanguage forms, a tendency that can be credited to the complexity of the passive and, what logically follows, the considerably greater potential for error. After all, in this case, it is not only the past participle that has to be accurately supplied but also the right tense and aspect have to be chosen, and, in consequence, the right form of the verb 'to be' has to be used. Generally speaking, however, there were only slight

differences in the occurrence of such forms over time, with the greatest number thereof being produced on delayed posttest 1 where the most contexts for the use of the passive occurred, and, as the qualitative analysis of the transcripts showed, the subjects were more willing to experiment with a variety of grammatical tenses.

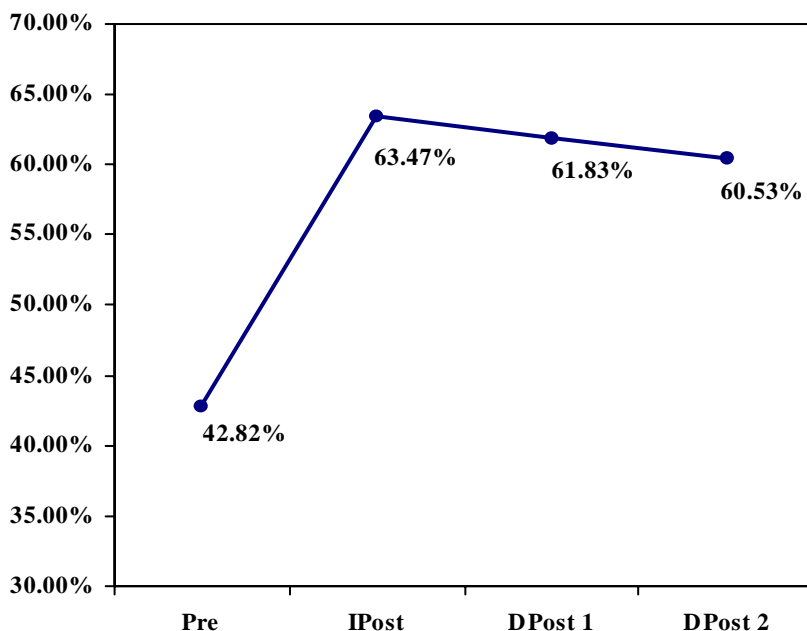


Figure 5.9. Accuracy percentages for the use of the passive voice on the oral task.

The tendencies referred to above become even more prominent when we examine the changes in the accuracy percentages that the 16 subjects displayed on the pretest and the three subsequent posttests. What immediately catches the eye here is the staggering 20.65% pretest-immediate posttest improvement in the learners' performance ( $W = 0$ ,  $p < .01$ ), which is in fact 3.83% higher than that observed in the case of past tense morphology. This finding can be partly accounted for by the fact that the initial accuracy percentage for the past tense was considerably higher than for the passive (58.12% as opposed to 42.82%) and, thus, there was a point beyond which further improvement was simply unfeasible. Still, it does come as a surprise since passive constructions are much more formally and functionally complex, and they require the develop-

ment of higher-level processing operations to be incorporated into the implicit knowledge store and become available for use in spontaneous language production. Much less surprising is perhaps the fact that, in contrast to the past tense, the initial gain failed to be carried

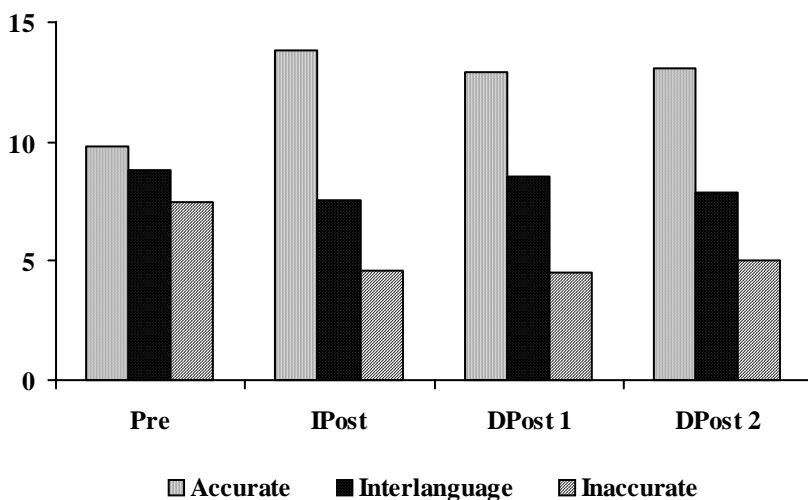
*Oral measure (n = 16)*

Category	Pretest	IPost	DPost 1	DPost 2	Nature of change	Significance (two-tailed Wilcoxon test) (a) Pre → IPost (b) IPost → DPost 1 (c) Pre → DPost 1 (d) DPost 1 → DPost 2 (e) Pre → DPost 2
Obligatory contexts median	22.5	28	34.5	34	Gain, maintained	(a) $W = 7, p < .01$ (b) $W = 0, p < .01$ (c) $W = 0, p < .01$ (d) $W = 75, p = .42$ n.s. (e) $W = 0, p < .01$
Accurate uses median	8.5	18	20.5	17.5	Gain, partly maintained	(a) $W = 0, p < .01$ (b) $W = 4, p = .01$ (c) $W = 0, p < .01$ (d) $W = 69.5, p = .33$ n.s. (e) $W = 0, p < .01$
Interlanguage uses median	7	6	8	6.5	Loss, maintained	(a) $W = 61, p = .63$ n.s. (b) $W = 9.5, p < .01$ (c) $W = 20, p = .04$ (d) $W = 69.5, p = .11$ n.s. (e) $W = 25.5, p = .34$ n.s.
Inaccurate uses median	7	4.5	4.5	5	Loss, maintained	(a) $W = 121, p < .01$ (b) $W = 38, p = .39$ n.s. (c) $W = 110, p < .01$ (d) $W = 15.5, p = .04$ (e) $W = 66.5, p = .17$ n.s.
Accuracy percentage	42.82%	63.47%	61.83%	60.53%	Gain, partly maintained	(a) $W = 0, p < .01$ (b) $W = 85, p = .40$ n.s. (c) $W = 0, p < .01$ (d) $W = 92, p = .23$ n.s. (e) $W = 0, p < .01$

*Table 5.7. The effect of the instructional treatment on the subjects' use of the passive voice on the oral measure.*

over in its entirety into the other two posttests, with the accuracy percentage decreasing by 1.64% from IPost to DPost 1 and a further 1.3% on DPost 2. It should be noted, however, that neither of these decreases proved to be statistically significant ( $W = 85$ ,  $p = .40$  for IPost-DPost 1 and  $W = 92$ ,  $p = .23$  for DPost 1-DPost 2) and much of the original advantage was maintained, as evident in the presence of a statistically significant Pre-DPost 2 difference of 17.71% ( $W = 0$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Thus, even though it is clear that the trend towards greater accuracy in the production of the passive was beginning to be reversed at the time delayed posttest 2 was administered, the learners were still much more correct in their use of this feature than prior to the pedagogic intervention, which is undoubtedly an effect that the majority of practitioners would be quite content with.

As will be recalled from section 5.1.6., the written measure for the passive voice differed from that utilized for the past tense due to the difficulty involved in designing a relatively open task that would ensure the occurrence of a sufficient number of obligatory contexts for its suppliance. Consequently, a decision was made to tap the subjects' explicit knowledge by means of a rather traditional test which required them to produce a variety of passive constructions in three sets of tasks, and for which each of the 33 learners was accorded an aggregate score out of a maximum of 78 points for the 26 items included. However, in order to avoid situations where no point would have been given to an item due to a relatively minor error it contained and to gain insights into the subjects' interlanguage development, a scoring system was adopted according to which a student got 3 points for instances of the passive which were entirely correct, and 2 or 1 points for items which were inaccurate in some respect. All such partly accurate items could be viewed as emergent constructions and they were pooled into one category which is more or less equivalent to the class of interlanguage forms coded in the transcripts of the interactions the subjects engaged in when performing the oral task. Thus, apart from the analyses of the measures of central tendency and dispersion as well as the tests of statistical significance conducted on that basis, it was also possible to analyze the written data in terms of the accurate, interlanguage and inaccurate passive forms supplied, thus facilitating comparisons between the outcomes of the oral and written measure.



*Figure 5.10. The mean numbers of accurate, interlanguage and inaccurate uses of the passive voice on the written measure.*

As shown in Figure 5.10. and Table 5.8., the mean number of correct responses increased from 9.79 on the pretest to 13.82 (15.5%) on the first posttest and, although it diminished somewhat on delayed posttest 1, the gain was largely carried over into delayed posttest 2 (12.58%), with all the differences between the pretest and the posttests reaching statistical significance ( $t = 7.60, p < .01$  for Pre-IPost,  $t = 5.55, p < .01$  for Pre-DPost 1 and  $t = 5.42, p < .01$  for Pre-DPost 2).<sup>8</sup> Simultaneously, a considerable 10.84% Pre-IPost drop in the mean number of non-targetlike uses of the passive could be observed, a loss that was statistically significant ( $t = 5.10, p < .01$ ), grew a further 0.46% on delayed posttest 1 and was largely maintained on delayed posttest 2. In spite of the fact that there was a slight increase in the number of entirely incorrect items supplied on this occasion, it was relatively small (2.10%) and not statistically

<sup>8</sup> In contrast to the previous analyses, it is possible to describe in this case the changes in the mean number of accurate, interlanguage and inaccurate forms with the help of both raw numbers and percentages due to the fact that the number of obligatory contexts for the use of the passive was fixed, and it equaled the number of items the subjects were required to supply on the test.

Category	Pretest		Immediate posttest		Delayed posttest 1		Delayed posttest 2		Significance (two-tailed <i>t</i> -test) (a) Pre → IPost (b) IPost → DPost 1 (c) Pre → DPost 1 (d) DPost 1 → DPost 2 (e) Pre → DPost 2
	Mean	%	Mean	%	Mean	%	Mean	%	
Accurate forms	9.79	37.65	13.82	53.15	12.91	49.65	13.06	50.23	(a) $t = 7.60, p < .01$ (b) $t = 1.92, p = .06^*$ (c) $t = 5.55, p < .01$ (d) $t = 0.60, p = .55^*$ (e) $t = 5.42, p < .01$
Interlanguage forms	8.76	33.68	7.54	29.02	8.57	32.98	7.88	30.30	(a) $t = 2.01, p < .05$ (b) $t = 2.04, p < .05$ (c) $t = 0.26, p = .80^*$ (d) $t = 1.82, p = .08^*$ (e) $t = 1.36, p = .18^*$
Inaccurate forms	7.45	28.67	4.64	17.83	4.52	17.37	5.06	19.47	(a) $t = 5.10, p < .01$ (b) $t = 0.30, p = .76^*$ (c) $t = 5.14, p < .01$ (d) $t = 1.89, p = .07^*$ (e) $t = 4.18, p < .01$

\* indicates lack of statistical significance

Table 5.8. The mean numbers and percentages of accurate, interlanguage and inaccurate uses of the passive voice (number of items = 26).

significant ( $t = 1.89, p = .07$ ). Given the almost equal means for correct uses on delayed posttests 1 and 2, it could have resulted from the process of backsliding affecting the forms which had an intermediate status in the subjects' interlanguages and were still being used variably. In fact, the experimental data provide some evidence for such an assumption, since, although the mean number of interlanguage uses did not change much over time, it fluctuated a lot, decreasing somewhat on the immediate posttest (1.22), increasing slightly on delayed posttest 1 (1.03), and falling once again on delayed posttest 2 (0.69). On the whole, however, the data indicate that quite a few items which were incorrect at the very outset were used in a more targetlike manner following the instructional treatment and the mean number of accurate uses remained relatively high in the long run, which may be taken as evidence for the



students' expanding and reinforcing their explicit knowledge of the target structure. Thus, in contrast to the use of the passive in the oral task, it would perhaps be premature to talk about a reversal in the overall trend and the initial gains atrophying with time. Such an outcome could be interpreted as indicating that the benefits of the pedagogic intervention proved more durable for explicit rather than implicit knowledge.

Further evidence for the plausibility of such an assumption comes from the changes in the mean numbers of points that the 33 subjects scored on the pretest and the three posttests, with the relevant data being diagrammatically presented in Figure 5.11. and listed in numerical form in Table 5.9. In this case, the mean score rose by quite spectacular 9.51 points (12.19%) from the pretest to the immediate posttest, an increase that was highly statistically significant ( $t = 6.79$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and then it remained approximately around the same level, with the losses on the remaining two posttests never exceeding even one percentage point (0.66 on delayed posttest 1 and a mere 0.46 on delayed posttest 2) or reaching statistical significance (IPost-DPost 1:  $t = 0.66$ ,  $p < .52$  and DPost 1-DPost 2:  $t = 0.73$ ,  $p < .47$ ). It is clear then that the initial gain was largely maintained over time, and the sizeable 8.39 point (10.76%) difference between the pretest and delayed posttest 2 indicates that the pedagogic intervention did have a permanent effect on the learners' ability to use passive constructions more accurately in controlled text-manipulation activities of the kind that were included in the test.

At the same time, however, it should be kept in mind that, as was the case with the past tense, only 16 out of the 33 subjects who completed the written tests also provided data on the spontaneous use of the passive, which makes the outcomes of the two measures somewhat difficult to compare. Therefore, it appears fully warranted at this point to examine in greater detail the performance of the 16 learners who provided both types of information, as only in this way can we obtain a more complete picture of the impact of the treatment on the controlled and spontaneous use of the targeted structure. As illustrated in Figure 5.12., where the accuracy percentages on the focused communication task are juxtaposed with the means on the grammar test converted into percentages, generally speaking, the tendencies for the 16 subjects were very similar to

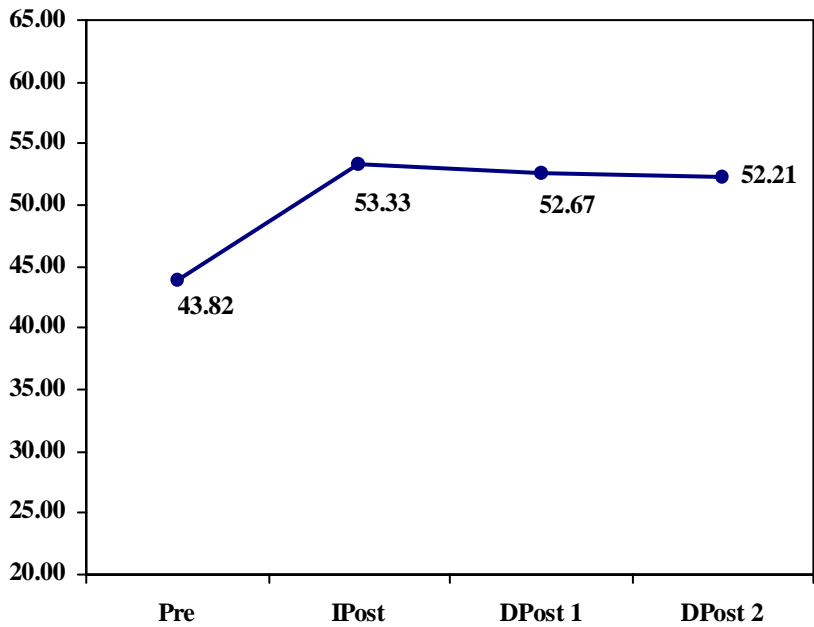
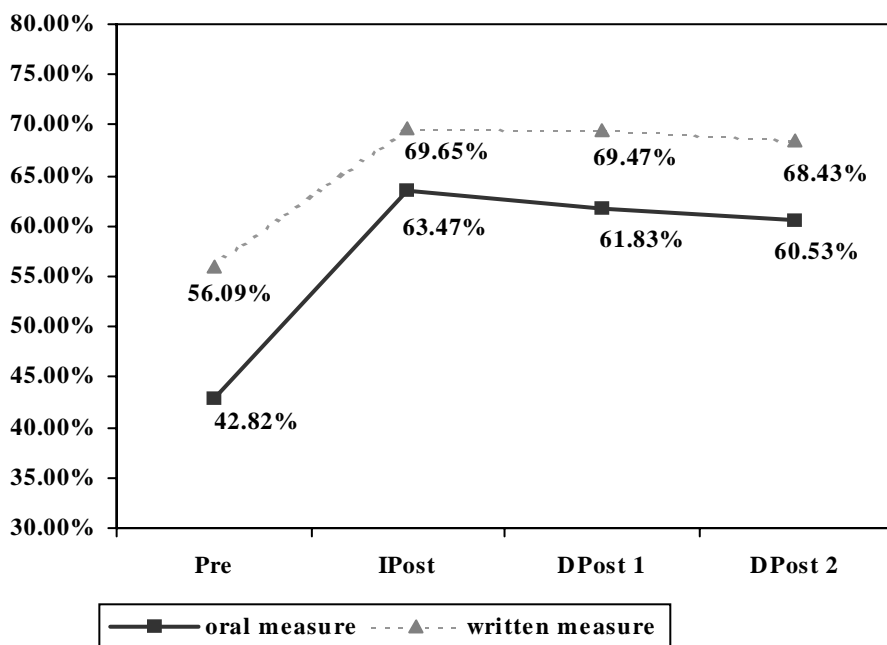


Figure 5.11. The mean scores on the tests measuring the subjects' mastery of passive constructions in monitored language use ( $n = 33$ ).

	Mean	%	SD	R	Significance (two-tailed <i>t</i> -test)
Pretest	43.82	56.18	17.57	65	n.a.
Immediate posttest	53.33	68.37	16.06	65	Pre → IPost: $t = 6.79, p < .01$
Delayed posttest 1	52.67	67.53	15.71	59	Pre → DPost 1: $t = 6.20, p < .01$ IPost → DPost 1: $t = 0.66, p < .52^*$
Delayed posttest 2	52.21	66.94	15.99	60	Pre → DPost 2: $t = 5.31, p < .01$ DPost 1 → DPost 2: $t = 0.73, p < .47^*$

\* indicates lack of statistical significance

Table 5.9. The mean scores, standard deviations, ranges and levels of statistical significance on the tests measuring the subjects' monitored use of passive constructions ( $n = 33$ ).



*Figure 5.12. Accuracy percentages on the oral task and the test for the students who provided both types of data (n = 16).*

those referred to above. In fact, the differences were very slight and lay in the magnitude of the initial advantage, which was 1.37% higher than for the whole class, the extent of the DPost 1-DPost 2 loss, which exceeded the one for the 33 students by 0.71%, as well as the 1.58% greater Pre-DPost 2 gain in the case of the 16 subjects.

When it comes to the comparison of the outcomes of the oral and written measure, the picture that emerges is very complex and perhaps somewhat surprising. As could be expected given the formal and functional complexity of the passive, the results represented in Figure 5.11. demonstrate quite convincingly that the students consistently did better on the test, even though a substantial part of the initial improvement had evaporated by the time delayed posttest 2 was administered. It should be kept in mind, however, that while the accuracy percentages were calculated on the basis of entirely correct uses of the passive, the aggregate test scores took into account both the forms that were fully accurate as well as the items that were deviant in some respect, with the letter receiving either 1

or 2 points depending on the gravity of the error. The diagrammatical representation in Figure 5.13. below shows that, when such partly accurate, emergent forms are excluded form the analysis and only entirely targetlike test uses are taken into account, the situation changes dramatically, with the subjects consistently performing better on the oral than the written measure. Even more surprisingly, the difference of 6.76% on the pretest increased to 11.55% on the immediate posttest and, although the gap was closed to some extent in the long run, the subjects still performed an astounding 10.05% better on the oral task than the discrete-point grammar test on delayed posttest 2. Unexpected as it might have been in view of the fact that learners tend to use grammatical features correctly in highly controlled rather than communicative activities, such a state of affairs can be explained in terms of the nature of the tasks used in the pre- and posttesting, a point that will be expanded upon in the discussion section below.

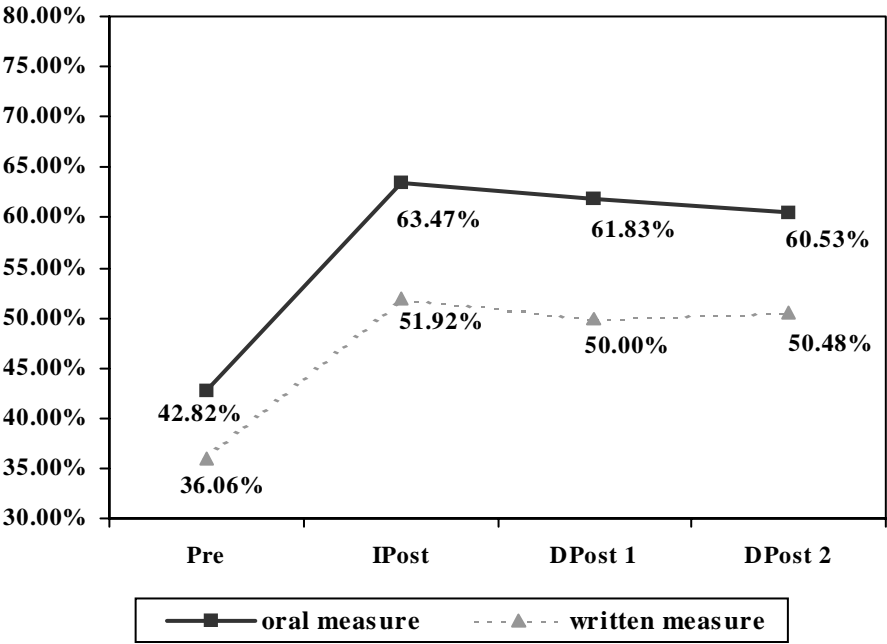


Figure 5.13. Accuracy percentages for the oral task compared with the percentages of fully accurate forms supplied on the written test ( $n = 16$ ).

Similarly to the past tense, the students' awareness of the passive was explored through tabulating the instances of self-correction and peer-correction, but this analysis was confined only to their performance on the oral measure. As can be seen from Table 5.10., the students were much more likely to monitor their production of the structure after the treatment. This is evidenced by the fact that the frequency of self-repair increased on each consecutive test, with the students attempting to fix their erroneous utterances five times as often on delayed posttest 2 (76) than on the pretest (15), a difference that obviously reached very high levels of statistical significance ( $W = 0, p < .01$ ). Even more importantly, most of the attempts at self-repair proved to be successful and their frequency also grew in the course of the posttesting. Smaller and statistically insignificant as the increases from one posttest to the next turned out to be in this case, the subjects managed to succeed in eliminating their errors 57 times on delayed posttest 2 in comparison with just 5 five times on the pretest, which represents such a huge gain that the application of a test of statistical significance was a sheer formality ( $W = 0, p < .01$ ). Although the occurrence of unsuccessful self-repair was as frequent on the immediate posttest as prior to the treatment and it increased slightly, though non-significantly, on the two delayed posttests, the percentage of such cases consistently dropped over time, amounting to 66.66% on the pretest and just 25% on delayed posttest 2. Yet another important finding that could be interpreted as providing support for the assumption that the pedagogic intervention enhanced the subjects' awareness of the passive is connected with the occurrence of situations where the learners provided corrective feedback on each other's output. As the information in the table shows, no such cases were observed on the pretest, there were 3 on the immediate posttest, 5 on delayed posttest 1 and 13 on delayed posttest 2, with the latter increase being statistically significant in comparison with the pretest ( $W = 0, p < .01$ ). Moreover, on all such occasions, the correction was in the direction of the TL and it was incorporated by the learner who produced the deviant form, which can be attributed to the fact that it was typically the more proficient students in each pair who supplied the feedback.

<i>Oral task (n = 16)</i>				
	Pretest	Immediate posttest	Delayed posttest 1	Delayed Posttest 2
self-corrections	15	49 <sup>1</sup>	67 <sup>1 2</sup>	76 <sup>1</sup>
<i>successful</i>	5	39 <sup>1</sup>	54 <sup>1</sup>	57 <sup>1</sup>
<i>unsuccessful</i>	10	10	13	19 <sup>1</sup>
peer-corrections	0	3	5	13 <sup>1</sup>
<i>successful</i>	0	3	5	13 <sup>1</sup>
<i>unsuccessful</i>	0	0	0	0
overgeneralization errors	3	5	6	10 <sup>1</sup>

\* The number in the upper index indicates the presence of a statistically significant difference with  $p < .05$ ; levels of statistical significance assessed by means of a two-tailed Wilcoxon test; 1 stands for the comparison with the pretest, 2 with immediate posttest and 3 with delayed posttest 1.

*Table 5.10. Self-corrections, peer-corrections and overgeneralizations connected with the use of the passive in the communication task.*

In contrast to the investigation of the past tense, the occurrence of overgeneralization errors as well as the lexical choices and types of passive constructions most frequently used were explored only on the basis of the spontaneously produced oral data in accordance with the researcher's belief that the subjects' test performance would not have provided him with useful insights in these areas.<sup>9</sup> Generally speaking, as can be seen from the numbers included in Table 5.10., the rules governing the use of the passive were very seldom extended to other grammatical features and, although their number kept increasing from one test to the next and the Pre-DPost 2 difference was substantial enough to reach statistical significance, their frequency was always rather small. Thus, it would probably be somewhat unwarranted to unambiguously ascribe the changes to the

<sup>9</sup> The rationale behind such a belief is quite straightforward. As regards overgeneralization errors, students could hardly have been expected to produce them as all the 26 items they were supposed to supply required the use of different passive constructions. When it comes to the selection of verbs and types of the passive, these were also largely determined in advance, perhaps with the exception of the last test component where the subjects had the opportunity to show some more creativity.

greater exposure to and use of the passive constructions during the rather massed and intensive instructional treatment.

As for the students' lexical and structural choices, they were to some extent restricted by the stimulus material on the basis of which they were requested to complete the task, but they were repeatedly encouraged by the researcher not to confine themselves to the information provided and try to make their own contributions. Although quite a few subjects did indeed add some new facts when completing the tasks, even in these stretches of discourse they tended to rely on a very limited repertoire of verbs ('build', 'see', 'buy', 'locate', 'visit', 'consider', etc.). In addition, the majority of the learners displayed a propensity for present and past simple tense passive constructions, with the forms involving other tenses and aspects or modal verbs being rare in their speech. Moreover, expressions such as 'was built', 'is located', 'are admired', 'was opened' and the like were used with considerable frequency in the subjects' interactions, and their numbers increased considerably in the posttesting. In fact, it is heavy reliance on formulae of this kind that accounts for the greater incidence of targetlike uses on the final posttest and the substantially higher accuracy percentage in comparison with the pretest. Even though there were some students who were much more creative and attempted to experiment with other lexical verbs and more complicated forms, all of this indicates that a sizable part of the passive constructions used could have been internalized as lexical units rather than been the outcome of the operation of the implicit rule-based system.

As indicated in the discussion of the effect of the treatment on past tense morphology, it was expected that the subjects would perform variably in their spontaneous and controlled use of the targeted structures as they represented sometimes very different levels of proficiency. As illustrated by Figure 5.14. and Table 5.11., this was very much the case for the 16 students who provided the spoken data, and there were few differences in this respect between the test administered prior to the pedagogic intervention and those that followed it. In fact, the plot for delayed posttest 2 constitutes to some extent a mirror image of the one depicting the accuracy percentages for the pretest, and shows that although all of the subjects

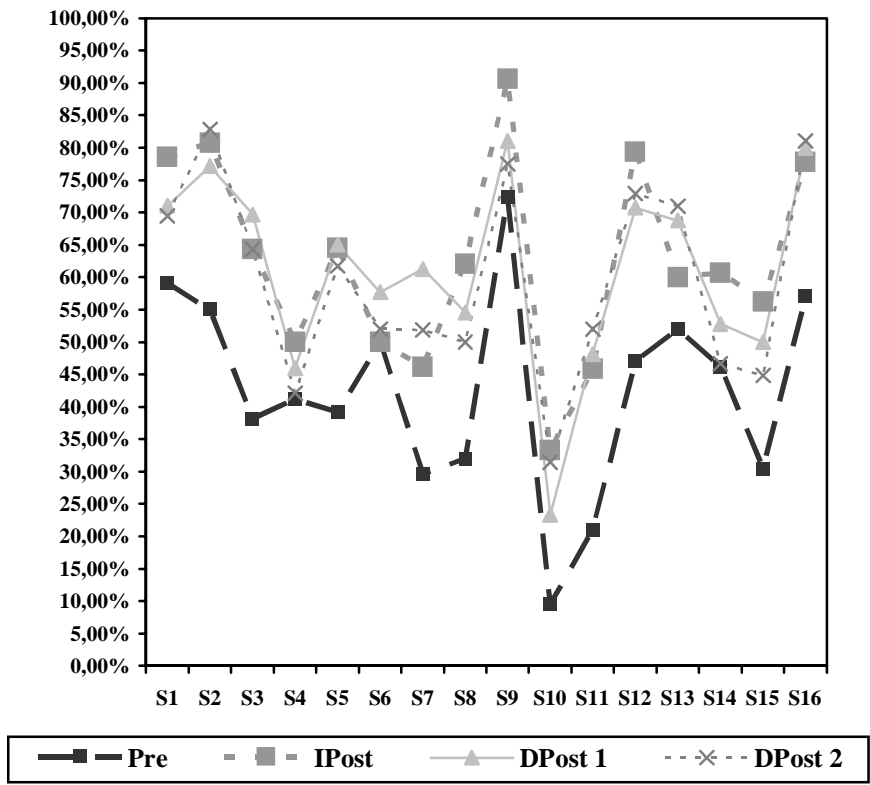


Figure 5.14. Accuracy percentages for individual subjects on the oral task ( $n = 16$ ).

	Pretest	Immediate posttest	Delayed posttest 1	Delayed posttest 2
Range	62.89	57.30	57.75	51.43
Standard deviation	15.75	15.64	15.11	15.29

Table 5.11. Ranges and standard deviations for the pretest and posttests on the oral task ( $n = 16$ ).

did improve more or less visibly in the long run, the treatment apparently had little effect on the presence of inter-learner variation. This is not to say, of course, that such an effect was non-existent,



since the gap between the performance of the best and the poorest students shrank considerably on each successive test and was eventually much lower on delayed posttest 2 than on the pretest, which is evidenced by the differences in the range values (51.43 as opposed to 62.89). However, in contrast to the oral task eliciting the use of the past tense, the standard deviations were almost identical on the pretest and the two posttests, which can be taken as evidence that the group as a whole did not grow more homogeneous over time.

The diagrammatical representations of the mean scores for individual students on the pretest and the three posttests in Figure 5.15. as well as the range and standard deviation values listed in Table 5.9. above indicate that things looked very similar on the grammar test. Also here there was considerable disparity in the performance of individual subjects and, although both the range and the standard deviation decreased somewhat from the pretest to delayed posttest 2, the changes were rather small and, similarly to the oral task, the plots representing the two are very similar in shape, with the average magnitude of improvement not differing much for the more proficient and weaker students. On a more optimistic note, there were only three subjects (S14, S19 and S30) who did slightly worse on delayed posttest 2 in comparison with the pretest and, in some cases, the differences between the initial and final scores obtained are quite spectacular (e.g. S7, S9, S13, S23, S31, etc.). What is particularly comforting is the fact that the scores of many such subjects were initially very low, making the headway even more conspicuous.

The last issue that was investigated in the present study was the degree of intra-subject variation in the use of the passive, and this area was analyzed qualitatively on the basis of the transcripts of the interactions in which the learners engaged when completing the oral task. Instances where the subjects used targetlike, interlanguage and non-targetlike forms of the same passive structure (e.g. the student saying 'The place is visited by famous people' and 'The house visited every year' a few turns later) were much more common here than was the case with past tense morphology, this

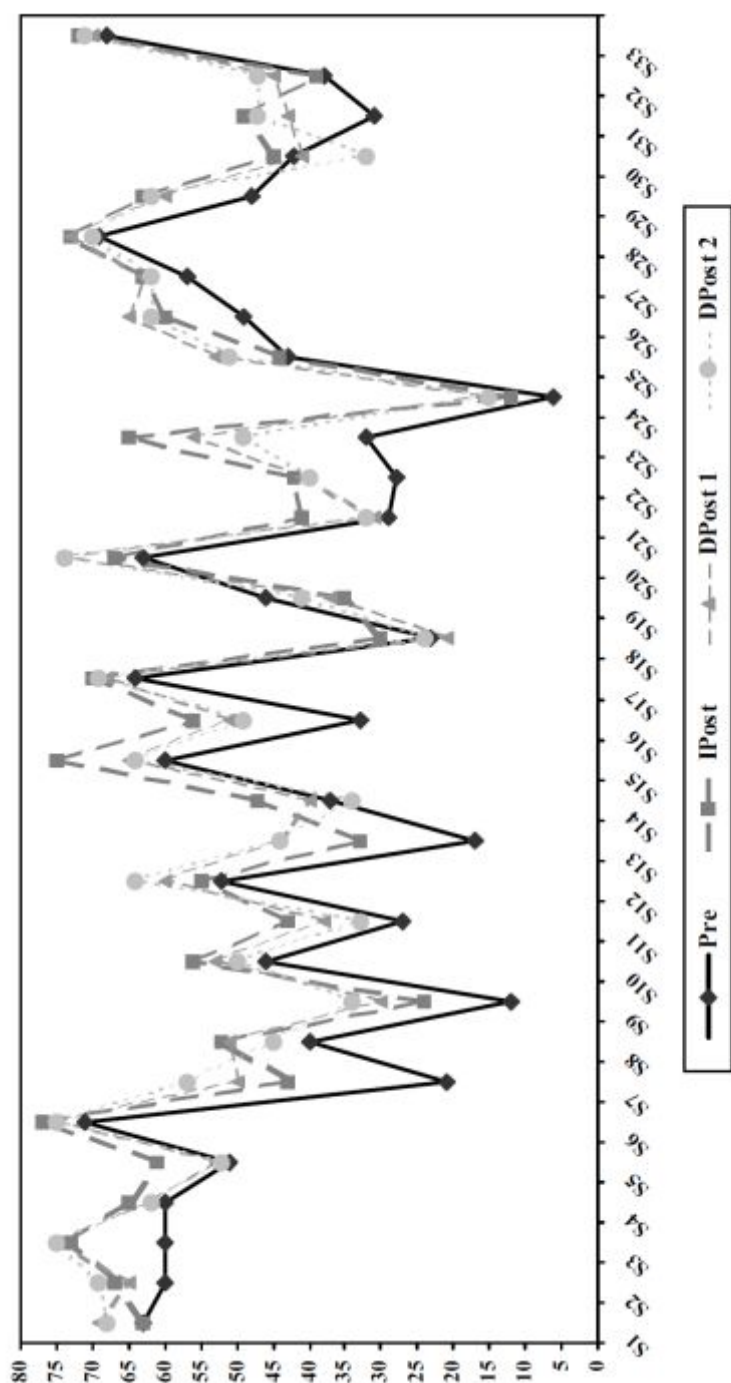


Figure 5.15. Mean scores for individual subjects on the test focusing on the passive ( $n = 33$ ).

phenomenon was not limited to the output of the poorest students, and it was as frequent prior to the treatment as on the last posttest. At the same time, however, such variability seldom affected the present and past simple passives of a number of verbs, a finding that is hardly surprising in the light of the aforementioned possibility that many such forms could have been integrated as fragments into the subjects' memory-based systems.

Another important observation was that most of the students apparently monitored their use of the feature despite the fact that the task instructions did not require them to use it and they had not been explicitly primed to pay special attention to the passive. This strategy could be observed quite frequently on the pretest and the three posttests, and it usually manifested itself when the student hesitated for a few seconds before producing what he or she hoped constituted the required passive form or made multiple adjustments to it after it had been generated. On the one hand, this finding confirms the numerous claims concerning the difficulty in devising production-based communication tasks requiring the use of specific structures and, on the other, indicates, that the improvement in accuracy observed in this study could have been as much the outcome of the integration of passive forms into implicit knowledge as the application of explicit rule knowledge in the process of monitoring.

#### 5.1.8. Discussion

Although, due to the pre-experimental design of the study, caution has to be exercised about making definitive pronouncements, the only logical conclusion to be drawn on the basis of the analysis presented above is that the largely implicit and intensive form-focused instruction was beneficial and aided the subjects in using the past simple tense and passive constructions more frequently, accurately, meaningfully and appropriately, not only immediately after the treatment but also in the long run. At the same time, however, the scope of the facilitative effect of the intervention, the extent to which it affected the subjects' implicit and explicit knowledge, the relative contributions of item learning and rule-based learning, as well as the permanence of the initial advantage appeared to depend at least to some extent on the complexity of the targeted structure and its status in the learners' interlanguage.

As will be recalled from section 5.1.1., past tense morphology is not only easier to acquire than the passive but, more importantly perhaps, it had already been partly internalized by most of the learners and the main source of persistent errors was that their implicit knowledge had not yet been sufficiently automatized. Thus, there were grounds to assume that the effect of FFI would be more substantial and more durable in this case, a prediction that did find substantial support in the data derived from the oral measure. A huge and highly statistically significant pretest-immediate posttest gain in the overall accuracy percentage could be observed here, and, even more encouragingly, the initial advantage was not only carried over into the subsequent posttesting but also continued to increase, with the students getting more and more accurate in the long run. This could be taken as evidence that the treatment did lead to the subjects gaining greater control over their implicit knowledge of the past tense, an assumption that draws further support from the virtual absence of interlanguage forms in their speech, the low degree of monitoring, particularly on the posttests, as well as the decrease in the incidence of intra-learner variability over time.

Moreover, although some of the verbs were apparently acquired as lexical units, it was primarily the weaker students who relied on this mode of learning, and the variety of past tense forms used in the speech and writing of at least some of the learners demonstrates that it was system learning that must have contributed to the increased consistency in their use of the feature and that they gradually gained greater control of the relevant rules. Besides, even if some of the verbs had indeed been internalized lexically and incorporated into the memory-based system, as, in all likelihood, must have been the case with irregular forms, the presence of enhanced input and output as well as the opportunity to use the past tense in spontaneous speech can also be hypothesized to have led to greater automatization of such forms. Irrespective of the exact nature of the learning that took place, the findings also provide some support for the Delayed-Effect Hypothesis, with the 8 weeks separating the immediate and final posttests functioning as an *incubation period* (Ellis 1999b; Gass 2003) during which interlanguage restructuring occurred. The sustained gains in accuracy indicate that this could have consisted in some lexically known elements being analyzed and incorporated into the rule-based system.

A much more complicated picture emerges in the case of the written task since part of the substantial initial gain decreased on the two delayed posttests, which raises serious doubts about the permanence of the facilitative impact of the pedagogic intervention on the learners' explicit representation. A conclusion of this kind, however, would be premature and overly simplistic for a number of reasons. For one thing, it should be remembered that the accuracy percentage for the pretest stood at 80.33%, which may not have come as a surprise given that probably all the subjects were familiar with the rule for the formation of the regular past and knew most common irregular past forms, but, at the same time, left little room for potential improvement. After all, whereas it is relatively easy to effect an increase in the accurate application of a grammatical feature when the students are accurate 5% of the time prior to the intervention, it is rather hard when 80% of their output is accurate since, at this level, inaccuracy can result from a slip of the tongue or absent-mindedness of the kind that even educated native-speakers are bound to display on occasion. Secondly, in this particular case, perhaps somewhat against the odds, the students did in fact improve their performance quite substantially immediately after the treatment, they maintained much of the original advantage on delayed posttest 2, and in fact produced more accurate forms each time they performed the task. As for the slight drop in accuracy from the immediate posttest to the delayed posttests, it could easily be attributed to the greater incidence of obligatory contexts for the use of the past tense and, thus, the greater scope for the commission of error.

On a somewhat different tack, on some occasions, so few instances of the feature occurred in a narrative that even a single mistake had a huge influence on the overall accuracy percentage of a particular student. This, in turn, could have considerably impacted the combined accuracy percentage for all the subjects and resulted in a diminution of the initial advantage, particularly in cases where the students' accuracy levels were very high on the previous test. What also has to be taken into account is the potential contribution of what is commonly known as the *fatigue effect* and the nature of the stimulus materials. After all, since the testing procedures were quite repetitive and monotonous, there might have come a point when the students simply stopped applying themselves to the task in hand. Also, the sets of pictures on the basis of which the narratives were

written may not have been equally captivating and they may have placed somewhat different demands on the subjects' cognitive and linguistic resources, both of which could have contributed to slight differences in performance. To cut a long story short, irrespective of the factors that brought about a slight drop in accuracy in the delayed posttests, the maintenance of an over 8% gain can be considered a success in the light of the very high level of initial performance.

Since the passive voice is formally and functionally complex, it requires the availability of higher-level processing operations and, as hypothesized in section 5.1.1., it was yet to be incorporated into the implicit knowledge store by most of the learners, the instructional treatment was expected to be less beneficial here than for the past tense. Thus, it came as a surprise that the subjects improved over 20% from the pretest to the immediate posttest on the oral measure and, despite slight deterioration in performance on the delayed posttests, they still managed to maintain a 17.71% advantage at the end of the experiment. As for the written measure, which was intended to provide insights into the learners' knowledge of the pertinent rules and their ability to use them in highly controlled exercises, the outcomes were seemingly more predictable since the students improved by 12.19% on the immediate posttest, with the gain being largely carried over into the delayed posttests. At the same time, however, even though the subjects' performance seemed to be superior to that in the communicative task, the initial increase was much lower and, even more surprisingly, when only the entirely correct test responses were taken into account and the accuracy percentages were computed, it turned out that on each test the learners did better on the oral measure than the written measure.

Although one might be tempted to conclude on the basis of such findings that there must have been something about the treatment which almost instantaneously contributed to the subjects overcoming the inert knowledge problem and becoming able to use the passive in relatively unfettered communication, such a diagnosis would surely be rash and somewhat unfounded. Partial explanation for the learners' astonishing improvement on the oral measure can be found in the nature of the focused communication task they were requested to perform. In the first place, it should be noted that the students were in a position to choose the passive constructions to be used in the oral activity and opted for those they could easily pro-

duce rather than more complex ones. By contrast, the test required them to employ a range of sometimes very advanced instances of the passive and determined in advance the choice of verbs that had to be used, which can explain why the students supplied fewer fully correct instances of the structure. Secondly, despite the researcher's endeavors, it was not possible to devise communication activities that would be fully equivalent in terms of their format, difficulty level as well as the choice of passive constructions, and, at the same time, require the subjects to use completely different lexis in completely different contexts. Consequently, some verbs and contexts were inevitably similar across the three versions of the task used in the pretest and the posttests, which could have resulted in the occurrence of a greater than expected overall *practice effect*. Thirdly, but partly related to the point just made, the results of the qualitative analysis of the recordings and transcripts provided some evidence that it was lexical rather than rule-based learning that accounted for the huge pretest-immediate posttest gain in the accuracy percentage and the subsequent retention of much of the initial advantage.

The occurrence of item-based learning is visible in the high frequency of present and past simple passive constructions of specific verbs which were repeated in different versions of the task, as well as the frequent occurrence of intra-learner variation and the students' reliance on their explicit knowledge as they were trying to use more difficult structures or novel lexical items. This would indicate that many less complex passive constructions had been incorporated into the memory-based component of the implicit representation and, thus, could be applied with great ease. By contrast, the more structurally intricate constructions as well as those that required the use of less frequent lexical verbs necessitated the employment of rule-based explicit knowledge, which, however, must have been highly proceduralized and automatized for use under such circumstances. In fact, it could be hypothesized that the drop in the accuracy percentages on the delayed posttests might have resulted from the fact that separately learnt items atrophy much more quickly without sufficient practice than language behavior based on the application of rules.

Obviously, it stands to reason that, in the case of the more proficient students, the pedagogic intervention did lead to the growth of the rule-based component of their implicit representation and aided them in gaining greater control over the passive construc-

tions they had already partly acquired. Also, as mentioned above, the occurrence of item-based learning is valuable in and of itself, since, as argued by such researchers as Nunan (1994), Lightbown (1998) or Myles (2004), the formulaic expressions initially learnt by rote can later be analyzed and trigger the development of the implicit rule-based system. Thus, even when learners are not developmentally ready to internalize a particular language feature, as could have been the case with some subjects in the present study, the value of FFI may lie in the fact that it sows the seeds for subsequent learning. Besides, irrespective of whether the instructional treatment applied contributed to the development of exemplar-based or rule-based knowledge, the students did use the passive more frequently, confidently and consistently in relatively spontaneous communication, a pedagogic outcome that is invaluable in its own right. After all, as Skehan (1998) makes plain, although the rule-based system must necessarily develop if learners are ever to become creative and proficient language users, a parallel memory-based system also has to be built for the sake of effective and effortless everyday communication.

As regards the remaining issues that were investigated in this study, the most discernible difference between the targeted features lies in the impact of the pedagogic intervention on the existence of individual variation in the subjects' performance on the oral and written task. Although inter-learner variability was the norm for both features on the pretest and the final posttest, it diminished much more in the case of past tense morphology, as evidenced by a considerable decrease in the values of the measures of dispersion following the instruction. By contrast, in the case of the passive, the standard deviations remained almost constant on the oral tasks and decreased only slightly on the written tests in the course of the posttesting. This indicates that the treatment had little effect on reducing the heterogeneity in the use of the structure, even though the gap between the highest and lowest scores was somewhat smaller. Given the greater formal and functional complexity of passive constructions and the fact that a prerequisite for their accurate, meaningful and appropriate use is the internalization of numerous tense/aspect distinctions, such an outcome does not come as a surprise. After all, the students in the group varied widely in the levels of English proficiency they represented and, thus, although all of them appeared to have benefited from the treatment,



the scope of their improvement was constrained by their overall place on the interlanguage continuum.

As for the impact of the pedagogic intervention on the subjects' awareness of the targeted features, the findings for the past tense and the passive are akin in most respects, with the students being much more likely to engage in self- and peer-correction after the treatment and the number of such instances increasing substantially over time. Admittedly, the effect was somewhat more pronounced and consistent for the passive, but this can easily be explained by the greater number of elements in a passive structure and the greater propensity for self-monitoring of the more complex constructions displayed by the subjects in this case. Also, whereas a single utterance was unlikely to contain more than one or two instances of the passive, multiple exemplars of the past tense were sometimes included in the subjects' turns, which made self-repair difficult. And, of course, it should not be forgotten that the students were eventually much more accurate in their use of the past tense than the passive, and many of them did not even have to self-correct since all or most of their output was targetlike.

A comment is also in order on the incidence of overgeneralization errors that could be attributed to the increased frequency and salience of past tense morphology and the passive. Such inaccuracies proved to be relatively infrequent for both target forms and can be regarded as negligible, despite the fact that the pretest-delayed posttest 2 increase was statistically significant. This is because, the 10 or so instances of such errors on the last posttest were to be found in the speech of roughly half of the subjects, which means that the other half never overused the targeted feature. Besides, most of those who erroneously extended its use to other contexts did so only once. Indeed, this is a very low price to be paid for the considerable improvement reported above and it augers well for the methodological microoptions which were applied in the treatment sessions.

As can be seen from the discussion, FFI was effective for both the past tense and the passive, but the scope and nature of the facilitative impact was at least to some extent the function of the complexity of the targeted feature and its status in the subjects' interlanguage. To be more precise, particularly in the case of the oral measure, the pedagogic intervention proved to be more beneficial for past tense morphology, as reflected in the higher pretest-posttest

gains in production accuracy, greater permanence of the initial advantage, as well as the fact that it was predominantly the automatization of rule-based implicit knowledge that can be hypothesized to have contributed to the subjects' superior performance over time. There are also grounds to assume that the instructional treatment resulted to some extent in reducing the gap in performance between the best and the poorest students in the class, and led to slightly greater homogeneity in this respect.

As for the passive, although the increase in the mean test score was largely maintained, the gain on the oral task was less durable and much of it can be attributed to the operation of the memory-based system, or, in the case of more complex constructions, considerable reliance on monitoring and highly proceduralized explicit knowledge. This is not to say, of course, that the greater incidence of passive forms, the huge pretest-delayed posttest 2 gain, or the improved performance on text-manipulation activities should be downplayed or easily glossed over since it would be hard to find a teacher who would refuse to be content with such an outcome of classroom instruction. Besides, even though implicit rule-based learning may be more permanent and, ideally, should constitute the ultimate goal of pedagogic intervention, both the rote-learning of isolated items and the ability to automatically apply consciously-known regularities and patterns are likely to act as catalysts for subsequent integration of specific grammatical features into the interlanguage.

The value of the relatively implicit FFI microoptions employed in the present study was also attested by the subjects' greater awareness of both of the targeted features as well as the fact that instances of their overuse were rather rare. Here, the inherent difficulty of the structure appeared to make little difference in terms of the overall trends, although it must be admitted that the considerable complexity of the passive, its status in the subjects' interlanguage and the more expedient need for monitoring led to higher incidence of self-repair in this case.

All of this goes to show that form-focused instruction is likely to be beneficial for both relatively simple structures that students have already acquired to some extent and complex constructions that learners are yet to integrate into their interlanguages. What practitioners need to be aware of, however, is that the techniques and procedures they employ may benefit the acquisition of such

features to varying degrees. In particular, they should keep in mind that especially more complex forms that are still beyond students' grasp in psycholinguistic terms have to be repeatedly revisited through the application of different clusters of relatively implicit FFI microoptions so that pertinent rules will eventually become integrated into implicit knowledge alongside the more flexible exemplars drawn upon in everyday communication.

## 5.2. Study 2 – Fostering the acquisition of the present perfect

Unlike the investigation of the acquisition of the past simple tense and the passive voice reported in the previous section, this research project was not motivated by the findings of a previous study, but, rather, by the virtual lack of literature dealing with the effect of FFI on the acquisition of a TL feature that learners of English as a second or foreign language find so problematic. In fact, there are only two relevant research projects that it is possible to mention at this point. One is a longitudinal study conducted by Bardovi-Harlig (2001) that will be referred to at some length below, but, here, it was the role of instruction as a potential trigger for the emergence of the present perfect rather than the effect of particular microoptions on its acquisition that was of primary interest to the researcher. The other was carried out by the present author (Pawlak 2003b) and sought to explore the extent to which Polish secondary school students were likely to consciously reflect on their use of the present perfect in dictogloss tasks. However, although it was found that such metatalk was possible and the subjects were able to reach satisfactory solutions concerning the form, meaning and use of the structure, the study did not investigate the acquisition of the form as measured by means of posttests.

While the paucity of such research can be viewed as merely surprising, the fact that no studies of this kind are being undertaken in our country is truly bewildering given the fact that, as most teachers would no doubt confirm, the acquisition of the present perfect simple and progressive poses a considerable learning difficulty to Polish learners of English. Thus, the main aim of the study reported in this section was to partly remedy the existing situation and expand our knowledge of how the present perfect tenses can be

taught by exploring the impact of a cluster of instructional microoptions on the acquisition of their form, meaning and use. In the following section the properties of the targeted form, its acquisition and status in the subjects' interlanguage are characterized, the choice of the instructional treatment and experimental design is justified, the procedures involved in data collection and analysis are described, and, finally, the research findings are presented, analyzed and discussed.

### 5.2.1. The targeted form, instructional treatment and experimental design

Although the research project differs from the study of the impact of FFI on the acquisition of the past simple tense and the passive in such crucial respects as the impetus for empirical investigation, the experimental design and the instructional treatment applied, it shares with it the concern to direct the pedagogic intervention at a language feature that the learners have already been taught but still experience considerable difficulty using not only accurately, but meaningfully and appropriately as well. Depending on the coursebook, the present perfect can appear for the first time at different points of a course, but, in most cases, some basic patterns can be seen somewhere towards the end of the first part of a particular series. What differs modern coursebooks from those used, say, a decade ago, is the widely accepted tendency to introduce the present perfect after the basic present and past simple tenses have become relatively well-established, a solution that is in keeping with the findings of SLA research (Bardovi-Harlig 2000, 2001). Also, in recognition of the problems involved in the acquisition of the structural, semantic and pragmatic dimensions, the feature is typically taught cyclically, which means that learners are gradually familiarized with its various meanings and uses, and provided with opportunities to practice it on a regular basis. More often than not, it is in the course of one of such approximations that the progressive aspect is introduced. While a range of plausible explanations for the widely acknowledged difficulty of the perfect tenses can be offered, it stands to reason that some of the problems learners are confronted with have their roots in the inherent properties of the structure and the existence of developmental patterns in its acquisition, the points to which we now turn our attention.

Most linguists subscribe to the view that the present perfect expresses *current relevance*, which means that it "serves to locate an event within a period of time that began in the past and extends up to the present moment" (Dowty 1979: 341). At the same time, however, the tense is characterized by *anteriority* since its meaning also comprises a past component and, by using the structure, "the speaker brings what happened in the past into the present" (Suh 1992: 105). As such, the present perfect is semantically close to both the past simple and the present simple, which can lead to cases of overgeneralization (e.g. when the form is used for purely past or present time reference) and its non-use in undergeneralizations as "learners carve out a form-meaning-use association for the present perfect from their previously established associations of form, meaning and use for the past and nonpast" (Bardovi-Harlig 2001: 241). Obviously, the core features of current relevance and anteriority are also shared by the progressive aspect of the present perfect, the crucial difference being that, in this case, they are combined with the notion of a continuous event or process (cf. Quirk et al. 1985). It is also worth mentioning that the semantics of the tense in question determines the choice of temporal adverbials with which it can occur, allowing these that include a sense of the present (e.g. 'lately', 'already', 'up to now', 'since', 'for', etc.) and simultaneously disallowing those indicating a specific time (e.g. 'yesterday', 'last week', etc.).

According to Bardovi-Harlig, an immediate consequence of such considerations is that "The acquisition of the present perfect (...) entails the acquisition of both the form of the present perfect ('have' + '-en') and its semantic and pragmatic features. In addition, learners must come to distinguish the meaning and use of the present perfect from its semantically close neighbors" (2001: 224). As she demonstrated in her twelve-month study of written and spoken texts produced by 16 adult ESL learners representing different L1 backgrounds, this is by no means a small feat to accomplish. She found that, similarly to L1 acquisition, the present perfect is acquired late, its emergence requires a stable rate of appropriate use of the past simple tense, and it precedes the appearance of the present perfect progressive and the pluperfect in learners' output. Moreover, the analysis of the data revealed that the acquisition of the tense resulted in the restructuring of the learners' interlanguages and affected the existing meaning-form associations,

with the effect that the rate of appropriate uses of the present and past simple tenses began to decline. What is of particular relevance here, FFI resulted in an increase in the number of occurrences of the present perfect but not the perfect progressive, and the extent of its beneficial effect was apparently the function of the learners' stage of development. More precisely, it was the students who had shown robust use of the tense before the pedagogic intervention that benefited the most from its provision, which indicates that it helped learners confirm their existing hypotheses and may be interpreted as providing tentative support for the Teachability Hypothesis (see Chapter Three, section 3.3.2.).

The characterization of the main properties of the present perfect tense and the findings reported by Bardovi-Harlig (2001) clearly indicate that the acquisition of this feature is likely to pose serious learning problems in terms of both explicit and implicit knowledge. If we apply the criteria for determining the inherent difficulty of grammar rules listed in section 4.2.3. of the preceding chapter, it becomes clear that the structure is formally and functionally complex, the generalizations concerning its use are not always very reliable, a fair amount of grammatical terminology may be indispensable when introducing it, and, finally, the lack of an equivalent construction might make the meaning and use dimensions difficult to grasp for Polish learners. Naturally, such properties also conspire to hamper the acquisition of rule-based tacit representation and, to make matters even more complicated, an array of other factors may also come into play. For one thing, the present perfect is a developmental feature and its acquisition entails Stage 6 processing operations if the goal of applying it real-time processing is ever to be accomplished. Secondly, as is the case with passive constructions, the feature is rather infrequent in classroom input unless it happens to be the structure of the day in a lesson and, particularly in foreign language contexts, learners are unlikely to encounter it outside the classroom. Moreover, although the tense is salient in the input, it could be argued that it holds little semantic value for the learner in the sense that the use of the present or past simple in its place does not necessarily lead to a communication breakdown, and the latter is in fact the norm in many contexts in American English. There are also grounds to assume that the structure is in many respects an example of a fragile feature (Goldin-Meadow 1982) and, thus, may not be easily learnable from exposure

and require the provision of FFI. In the light of such problems, it stands to reason that serious learning problems appear to be unavoidable, an assumption that proved to be warranted in the case of the participants of the present study.

Attending grade 2 of former secondary school, the subjects had already been taught the basic rules concerning the formation and use of the present perfect simple and progressive, and supplied with numerous opportunities to practice it in a variety of text-manipulation activities and, to a much lesser extent, simple communicative tasks (see section 5.2.3. below for more information about the subjects). Nonetheless, some of them still experienced difficulty using the structure correctly even when they were provided with sufficient time and could freely draw upon their conscious knowledge of relevant rules. Such problems were connected both with the form, which was more common with the weaker students and indicated that they had failed to learn the rule in its entirety or to proceduralize the rules governing the use of the auxiliary and the formation of past participles, and its appropriate use. In the latter case, the present perfect was either underused and replaced with the present and past simple in contexts where its use was required (e.g. 'We know each other for a long time' or 'He didn't come back yet') or, much less frequently, overgeneralized to situations where the aforementioned simple tenses would have been more natural (e.g. 'We have gone there yesterday' or 'I haven't been ready yet').

Things looked far more bleak in the case of more communicative applications of the structure, since even the most proficient students employed it only very infrequently of their own accord and they visibly relied on their conscious knowledge when prompted to do so. This is not to say, of course, that they did not create obligatory contexts for the suppliance of the feature, but, rather, that they tended to fill them with the present and past tenses they felt much more comfortable with. On the rare occasions when they actually used the present perfect simple and progressive in relatively unplanned discourse (e.g. in a simulated conversation in pair or group work), they often did so incorrectly, with the problems being largely identical with those accounting for errors in controlled exercises. Taken together, all of these facts indicated that not only had the learners fallen victim to the inert knowledge problem in that they possessed explicit rather than implicit knowledge of the form,

but also that, in some cases, such knowledge was incomplete or inadequately proceduralized.

The inherent properties of a feature as well as its status in the learners' interlanguages are of paramount importance when deciding on the choice of the FFI microoptions to be used and they also determined the nature of the instructional treatment applied in the present study. Since the present perfect had not yet been incorporated into the implicit knowledge system by most of the subjects and some of them even experienced great difficulty using it in the right way in planned discourse, it was decided that the instruction should be somewhat more explicit than in the case of the past tense and the passive. This is because, despite what the proponents of non-intervention or some focus on form advocates may claim, it is highly unlikely that learners who cannot grasp the rules governing the use of a structure and apply them in text-manipulation activities would benefit much from instruction comprising only such implicit input-based techniques as input flooding, input enhancement or recasting. Also, it would have been very difficult to set up genuine implicit structure-based tasks in a situation where the students hardly ever used the feature in free production and could easily replace it with simpler present and past tenses, and still be understood by the teacher or fellow learners.

In accordance with this assumption, the intervention took the form of a combination of several implicit and explicit microoptions, with the former being represented by enhanced exposure and typographical alternations (i.e. input flooding and input enhancement), and the latter including consciousness-raising and text-reconstruction tasks. In addition, the learners were provided with corrective feedback, but, in this case, it was more overt and involved the use of elicitation, metalinguistic clues, clarification requests and repetitions, all of which fall into the category of *negotiation of form* (see Chapter Four, section 4.1.2.). It was hoped that FFI of this kind would not only assist the subjects in gaining greater control over the consciously known rules governing the use of the present perfect, but also result in their attending to the form-function mappings and trigger IL change in the long run. There was also the possibility that those learners who had reached the appropriate developmental stage might in fact build or automatize their implicit representation, and start using the targeted forms more confidently and consistently in spontaneous communication.



The research project took the form of a *quasi-experimental study*, with two intact grade 2 secondary school classes being randomly designated as experimental (E) and control (C). Although, as expounded in some detail in section 5.1.3. above, there are both practical and ethical considerations which often make such a solution unfeasible or even unacceptable in a classroom setting, its adoption in this particular case was possible for a number of reasons. Firstly, the classes were roughly equivalent in terms of the learners' overall proficiency level, motivation as well as the amount of exposure outside of school (see section 5.2.3. below for details), and they even had English lessons on exactly the same days, which reduced to some extent the impact of extraneous variables. Secondly, the study did not place as heavy demands on valuable classroom time as the one reported in the first part of the chapter, as it involved just one grammatical structure, the instructional treatment was limited to just four sessions and only three lessons had to be devoted to testing. Thirdly, but perhaps most importantly, the researcher had been the regular English teacher in both classes for almost two years and, thus, he knew all the students and was able to make sure that the data collection procedures were exactly the same in both cases without introducing an element of anxiety into the picture. He was also in a position to verify that the target feature would not become the focus of attention in the control group between the pretest and the final posttest, and that it would not be taught in the experimental group in the five weeks separating the immediate and delayed posttesting. Equally importantly, such a set-up provided him with the opportunity to get around the ethical problems of not providing the best possible instruction to the students in the control group by using the instructional materials and procedures with the class after the experiment was over.

As regards the research schedule, the experiment was carried out during regularly-scheduled classes and was spread over the period of nine weeks. At the end of the first week, the pretest was administered, which was followed by four 45-minute treatment sessions in the experimental group in weeks 2 and 3, and the immediate posttest at the beginning of week 4. In the next five weeks, the teaching of the present perfect was eschewed, which does not mean of course that it did not occasionally appear in coursebook texts and other materials, but, since exactly the same things were covered in both classes, this is unlikely to have affected the findings.

Finally, in the last lesson in week 9, the students were requested to write the delayed posttest and fill out a background questionnaire. The schedule was identical for the experimental and control group, with the pretests and posttests being conducted on the same day, and the only difference lying in the fact that as the students in the former were working with the instructional materials, those in the latter were following the coursebook.

### 5.2.2. Research questions

Most of the research questions explored in this study were very similar to the ones addressed in the empirical investigation of the effect of FFI on the acquisition of past tense morphology and passive constructions, the only difference being that it was somewhat more modest in its aims. The spoken and written data collected during the pretest and the two posttests were analyzed with a view of examining the impact of the intervention in the following areas:

- the frequency of occurrence of the present perfect in the students' speech;
- the degree of accuracy, meaningfulness and appropriateness of use of the targeted feature in spontaneous and monitored language production;
- the occurrence of interlanguage forms in the subjects' spoken and written output;
- the extent to which the potential gains in the subjects' performance could be attributed to the operation of the memory-based and rule-based systems;
- the students' awareness of the present perfect simple and progressive and their ability to monitor the use of the features in free production tasks;
- variation in the use of the form both at the level of the group and the individual.

As will be explained at greater length in section 5.2.5. below, both quantitative and qualitative techniques were utilized in the analysis of the data collected, depending on the nature of a particular issue. Also, whereas most of the research questions were investigated for both groups so that relevant comparisons could be made, inter-subject and intra-subject variability were only explored for the experimental students since the researcher was mainly interested in

whether the provision of FFI would trigger any substantial changes in these areas.

### 5.2.3. Subjects

The subjects were 72 grade 2 Polish secondary school learners attending two parallel classes taught by the researcher, each of which consisted of 36 students. Similarly to the subjects of the study focusing on the past tense and the passive, the participants of this research project were not yet affected by the educational reform, and, thus, they were following a four-year course of study and still had two years of English instruction ahead of them. Since the investigation was carried out in the same school, the curricular policy was also identical, with the students in both the experimental and control group being provided with three 45-minute English lessons a week and divided into groups of 18 on those occasions. Judging by the grades the students had been awarded at the end of the winter semester, the two classes were comparable in terms of their English, as evidenced by the fact that the grade point average amounted to 3.67 for the experimental group and 3.79 for the control group. On the whole, the level of proficiency in both classes could best be described as preintermediate, or A2 in terms of the levels specified in the *Common European Framework*, but, as is the norm in Polish schools, they were classic examples of mixed-level groups. Consequently, while some students far surpassed the average and would always speak in class, there were also such who were visibly lagging behind and found it difficult to actively participate in lessons.

The analysis of the data obtained by means of a background questionnaire administered immediately after the delayed posttest revealed that the students in both groups were also largely equivalent with regard to the duration of English instruction they had received, their attitudes to the language and its learning, the prevalent kind of motivation they manifested, as well as the overall amount and type of out-of-school exposure. On average, the subjects making up the experimental group had been learning English for 2.96 years whereas those comprising the control group for 3.15 years, with 7 years being the longest duration of regular out-of-school instruction. When requested to identify their reasons for having chosen English as their main foreign language at the

beginning of secondary school, the subjects most frequently pointed to its indispensability in getting a good job in the future, the potential role it could play in their further education, and its usefulness in contacts with foreigners both in Poland and abroad, all of which indicate the presence of a strong instrumental motive. Only three learners in the experimental group and four in the control group said that they either had had no influence on the choice of the language, quoted chance factors or declared that the decision had been made by their parents against their will. 31 (86.11%) experimental and 32 (88.89%) control students stated that they enjoyed learning English, a response they typically justified by saying that it was relatively easy to learn, the themes covered and materials used helped them enrich their world knowledge, and the lessons were varied and challenging. In both cases, the learners who openly declared that they did not like learning English or had rather ambivalent feelings about it were the weaker ones, who found it difficult to keep up with the rest of the class and believed they had little aptitude for language learning in general.

Most of the experimental and control learners admitted that they had little access to English outside school and most often listed such sources of exposure as English-speaking news channels such as BBC or CNN, magazines such as *Time* or *Newsweek*, songs and the Internet. Several students in both groups also reported subscribing to learner journals such as *The World of English*, reading simplified versions of English classics, and using e-mail to regularly correspond with native speakers. Contrary to the researchers' expectations, only 6 experimental and 8 control learners stated that they attended private lessons on a regular basis, a state of affairs that was comforting in the sense that the danger of the findings being in some way distorted by out-of-school instruction was minimal. In this connection, it should also be noted that only seven students in the experimental group and nine in the control group reported that they did not confine themselves to the tasks set for homework, but also tried to improve their English on their own by doing exercises from grammar practice books, jumping ahead in the coursebook, listening to tapes or writing compositions. Although it is possible that the instructional treatment prompted some of these or perhaps other students to focus on the present perfect and get some additional practice in this area, the chances of this happening were rather low in view of the fact that the statements concerning learning on their

own were hedged and accompanied by a qualification that this only happened from time to time.

#### 5.2.4. Instructional materials and procedures

The instructional treatment was divided into four sessions, each of which took a whole regularly-scheduled 45-minute lesson. As mentioned in section 5.2.1. above, the intervention was more explicit than in the case of the past tense and the passive in recognition of the fact that the main challenge for most subjects appeared to be not so much bringing about instantaneous acquisition or automatizing the existing implicit representation, but, rather, proceduralizing conscious rule-knowledge, triggering noticing and paving the way for subsequent interlanguage restructuring. Therefore, the relatively implicit techniques of *input flooding* and *input enhancement* were complemented with such explicit microoptions as *dictogloss tasks* and *consciousness-raising* activities as well as the employment of *negotiation of form* to encourage learners to self-repair their erroneous utterances. The latter involved resorting to such overt feedback options as *elicitation*, *metalinguistic clues* or *repetitions* as well as the somewhat more covert *clarification requests* (see Chapter Four for the discussion of the FFI microoptions employed in this study).<sup>10</sup>

As was the case with the past tense and the passive, these options were not used in a random fashion, but, rather, a carefully planned instructional sequence was employed. Each treatment session began with the learners performing a consciousness-raising activity, a text-reconstruction task or a combination of both in accordance with the assumption that they needed to consolidate and proceduralize their conscious rule knowledge, thus being primed for successful noticing of the targeted feature in the more implicit activities which followed. Since the learners had already been taught how to form the present perfect simple and progressive and acquainted with the main requirements for their application, rather

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<sup>10</sup> Although clarification requests were used in this study to address a particular grammatical feature (i.e. the present perfect simple and progressive), it would be incorrect to call this type of intervention *output enhancement* since a number of other feedback moves were employed and, overall, the treatment was much more explicit than in the case of past tense morphology and passive constructions.

than triggering the development of new knowledge, the C-R activities primarily aimed at tying up all the loose ends and drawing the subjects' attention to the areas which they found particularly problematic. Such tasks were completed in pairs and involved deciding which utterance was correct, determining whether sentences were accurate or inaccurate and providing correct versions thereof where necessary, or constructing utterances on the basis of the content words provided (see Appendix 7 for an example of a C-R task used in the treatment). Although all the interactions were to be conducted in English, the students quite often drew upon their mother tongue and only tried to switch back to English when the teacher was approaching. In fact, this was to be expected given the difficulty involved in using the foreign language to discuss grammatical concepts and was not regarded as a major factor that could jeopardize the success of the activity.

As regards text-reconstruction activities, the teacher would read twice a short text seeded with instances of the targeted structure and containing some exemplars of the past and present tenses, the students were asked to jot down familiar words and phrases, and then instructed to create a text that would mirror the original in terms of its content. The right kind of texts being rather hard to come by, the researcher contrived the passages to be used in such dictogloss activities, which did not seem to compromise the tasks in any way (see Appendix 8 for an example of a text used in a dictogloss task). In fact, the students visibly enjoyed completing them and, as the tape recordings and transcripts of the interactions showed, they made the present perfect the topic of most of the LREs and succeeded in accurately resolving most of the problems. Also, in contrast to the consciousness-raising activities, they seldom resorted to Polish to reflect upon the use of the TL in such cases (see Pawlak 2003b for discussion of these issues). The performance of both explicit structure-based tasks and text-reconstruction activities was always followed by a brief feedback session in which their outcomes were verified, and the students' queries and doubts regarding the use of the targeted feature were dealt with.

In the next stage, the learners were always provided with a short written text containing multiple examples of the present perfect simple and progressive as well as a thematically-related spoken passage or dialogue. Although there was no connection between the texts used in the four treatment sessions, they usually

dealt with biographical details of celebrities or descriptions of the problems people faced as a consequence of some recent event, since only in this way was it possible to ensure the occurrence of a sufficient number of obligatory contexts for the use of the targeted feature and to contrast it with present and past simple tenses. In each case, the reading or listening text was accompanied by a related follow-up task which required the subjects to answer true-false or open-ended questions, complete gaps in sentences or match pairs of utterances. Such activities were first done individually and then the learners were allowed to quickly compare their solutions with those of their peers. Both in the written texts and the reading and listening comprehension activities the simple and progressive forms of the present perfect as well as the adverbials that necessitated their use were graphically highlighted by means of capital letters and bolding (e.g. 'Sally HAS KNOWN her FOR two years'). Moreover, to make the pertinent semantic distinctions more salient, a decision was made to also graphically enhance all the past simple tense forms as well as such rare present simple tense forms which might invite the overgeneralization of the perfect tense, as in 'He already knows the truth'. Here, however, only italics were used for that purpose so that the learners' focal attention could still be directed at the targeted structure (see Appendix 9).

After the learners had familiarized themselves with the passages and dialogues, and completed the follow up-tasks, they presented their responses to the whole class and answered a number of questions which were not only connected to the texts (e.g. 'Why is Sally so sad?', expecting a response such as 'Because her boyfriend has just left her') but also encouraged the subjects to relate the content to their own lives (e.g. 'Jack has been learning French for three years. And how about yourself? How long have you been learning English?'). Whenever the subjects committed errors in the use of the target feature, the teacher attempted to get them to self-repair by initiating a negotiating sequence through the use of one of the feedback options listed above and, at the same time, ignored all the other inaccuracies in their output. The errors that were addressed involved both the structure, as when the incorrect form of the auxiliary 'have' or the past participle was employed, and problems with appropriate use of the tense, as reflected in overgeneralizations and undergeneralizations. When the students failed to engage in self-repair or their uptake was unsuccessful, the teacher

simply fixed the problem himself stressing the correct form and moved on to the next question without insisting on the feedback being incorporated, although, in some cases, the learners did it of their own accord in subsequent turns. The following exchanges taken from the transcripts of the recordings of the instructional sessions illustrate the ways in which corrective feedback was provided:

- (7) S. *Christopher Reeves and ah her wife understood each other great since they met*  
T. ... but you have 'since' in the sentence so what tense should you use? (*metalinguistic clue*)  
S. *He ah they (...) have understand ... understood each other (successful self-repair)*
- (8) S. (...) *My parents have the car for ten years*  
T. ... Your parents **HAVE** a car for ten years? (*repetition*)  
S. *yes ... yes they have a car since ten years and they like driving (unsuccessful self-repair)*  
T. (...) *Ok they **HAVE HAD** the car for ten years right now ... OK and have you ever driven a car Peter? (the correct version is given and no uptake occurs)*
- (9) S. *Frank has went ah has gone to Greece last May and he like it very much*  
T. ... Can you say this in a different way? Frank ... (*elicitation*)  
S. ... (3) *Frank ah ... Frank has went aha went to Greece ... Frank went to Greece yes ... yes (successful self-repair)*
- (10) S. *The man ah he have just bought a new house in the city*  
T. ... Sorry? I don't understand ... (*clarification request*)  
S. ... *he ah he ... he have just bought ... Have just buy? (unsuccessful self-repair)*  
T. *He **HAS JUST BOUGHT** a new house in the city (the correct form is provided)*  
S. ... *aha he has just bought and he likes the city (...) (successful uptake)*

#### 5.2.5. Instruments of data collection and analysis

The testing instruments which provided the data on the basis of which the spontaneous and monitored use of the present perfect was to be evaluated were identical in the experimental and control group, and took the form of a free production task and a traditional grammar test. As was the case with the investigation of the past tense and the passive, three versions of each measure were devised to avoid the impact of the practice effect. At the same time, in order to minimize the danger of the potential discrepancies in the level of



difficulty of each version unduly influencing the results, a similar testing scheme was adopted with the subjects being divided into three equal groups which worked on the three tests. Thus, while some students completed version A on the pretest, others completed version B and others yet version C, and the situation was reversed on the immediate and delayed posttests (see a detailed explanation of the scheme in section 5.1.6.). Another important similarity to the previous study lies in the fact that while all the 36 learners in both the experimental and control group took the written test and provided the data for the analysis of their planned use of the present perfect, only half of them (18) were tape-recorded in each case, thus supplying the researcher with information about their ability to deploy the feature in relatively spontaneous communication. Like before, such a decision was necessitated by the unwillingness to be recorded openly manifested by some of the learners as well as logistical and technical limitations. What should also be noted is that the students always performed the oral measure before the written measure for fear that the opposite set-up might result in the learners retaining some of the patterns from the test and more or less consciously transferring them to their oral performance.

The oral task was always performed in dyads which were formed at random by 18 students in the experimental and 18 in the control group, and remained the same for the pretest and the two posttests. The students in each pair received two different role cards with detailed instructions in Polish which requested them to conduct a conversation with a good friend they had not seen for a very long time. The prompts were phrased in such a way as to create multiple contexts for the use of the present perfect simple and progressive, with the students having to ask their partners about the changes that had taken place in their lives and tell them about what they had been up to themselves since the last meeting (see Appendix 10). Even though it would definitely be an overstatement to call this activity a focused communication task, the use of Polish in the prompts was not uncontroversial and carried with it the risk that the weaker students would translate the sentences word for word, the researcher decided that only in this way would he be able to elicit a sufficient number of obligatory contexts for the use of the targeted feature.

This belief was based on the results of an informal piloting stage in which several different activities were tried out with students not participating in the research project. It turned out that attaining the same goal with English prompts, sentences to be completed or pictures to be commented on could only produce numerous instances of the present perfect at the cost of reducing the communicative nature of the task. Thus, despite its shortcomings, the quasi-role play activity eventually used to elicit relatively free production of the targeted form appeared to be the only viable option and, as the subsequent analyses demonstrated, did its job quite satisfactorily. Obviously, such an outcome cannot only be credited to inherent task properties, and can be said to have resulted from the priming effect of the treatment. This is because, although the learners were not notified of the purposes of the task or asked to employ a specific structure in its completion, the activities performed in the four treatment sessions must have sensitized them to the present perfect and they appeared to be fully cognizant of the fact that this feature was of particular interest to the researcher.

On receiving the role cards, the subjects were given two minutes to acquaint themselves with the information, requested to refrain from translating the instructions word for word and asked to add any other facts they deemed necessary, and then they had 10 minutes to complete the activity. The ensuing interactions were audio-taped by means of dictaphones placed in front of the subjects, with the 9 recordings made in each group being subsequently transcribed and subjected to a combination of quantitative and qualitative analyses. Regardless of the nature of the procedures applied, it was the performance of each student and the whole group that was of interest to the researcher. As regards the numerical analysis, it involved counting the obligatory contexts for the suppliance of the present perfect simple and progressive, as well as the targetlike, emergent and non-targetlike uses of the structure. The following criteria were adopted for classifying the uses of the targeted feature into each category:

- the suppliance was considered accurate when the form and use of the present perfect were practically flawless (i.e. most minor pronunciation errors were ignored);
- a particular use was viewed as emergent when the form was not entirely correct (e.g. the wrong form of the auxiliary or the past participle was used, or, in the case of the present

perfect progressive, the '-ing' marker was omitted or replaced with a participial form) or a correct form of the present perfect was overgeneralized in some way (e.g. 'She has been here yesterday', 'I have been knowing her for two years');

- the suppliance was regarded as inaccurate when the learner failed to employ the auxiliary or the past participle, or when formal inaccuracies were combined with inappropriate use (e.g. 'She have gone there yesterday').

Subsequently, the accuracy percentages were determined for each student and the group, and the values of the pertinent measures of central tendency and dispersion were computed. Additionally, the instances of self-repair and peer-correction were tabulated, with a further subdivision into successful and unsuccessful uptake being made, and the number of overgeneralization errors was established. Since some of the data obtained were not normally distributed, the levels of statistical significance were established by means of the *non-parametric Wilcoxon matched pairs signed ranks test* and the *Mann-Whitney test*, depending on the comparisons being made. Thus, the former was employed whenever the changes in the performance of one group on the successive tests were assessed, and the latter was used when the experimental and control groups were compared. Qualitative procedures were applied with the purpose of determining whether the learning was rule-based or lexical in nature and investigating the degree of intra-learner variation in the spoken output of individual subjects.

In order to ensure consistent coding of the data, a randomly selected sample of transcripts procured in the course of the pre- and posttesting was analyzed by a highly-qualified English teacher using the guidelines provided above and the results were compared to those obtained by the researcher. The interrater reliabilities were then calculated and they turned out to be high in all cases, as reflected in the fact that the lowest value of the Pearson Correlation Coefficient stood at .965. As was the case with the previous study, steps were also taken to ascertain that the coding of the data was consistent from one test to the next and, thus, the researcher reanalyzed a sample of the pretest and immediate posttest data right after the delayed posttesting, but the intrarater reliabilities proved to be satisfactory, with the lowest coefficient calculated amounting to .981.

Due to the immense difficulty of eliciting multiple uses of the present perfect tenses in a free production writing task as well as the researchers' interest in the effect of the treatment on the subjects' explicit knowledge, a decision was made to collect the written data by means of a traditional, discrete-point grammar test. The test consisted of three parts which required the learners to provide the correct form of the verb in parentheses, decide whether a sentence was accurate or inaccurate and, in the latter case, supply the correct version, and complete a set of sentences with an appropriate verb form. The reliability of the three versions was determined on the basis of the pretest results and it turned out to be quite high, as evidenced by the value of Cronbach alpha obtained ( $\alpha = .88$ ). Of the three tasks, the last was by far the most demanding, since apart from deciding what tense was appropriate in a specific context and providing the correct form, the subjects also had to make their own lexical choices. It should also be noted that the items included in the text required not only the use of the present perfect tenses but also several past and present tense forms, as only in this way could the researcher determine whether the learners were aware of the complex semantic distinctions between these structures. The three versions of the test were identical in their format, task types and even the kinds of contexts for the use of particular forms, and mainly differed with regard to the lexis used (see Appendix 11 for versions A, B and C of this testing instrument).

On each occasion the measure was administered, the subjects were given 20 minutes to complete the test and, as explained in the preceding section, all the tests in the experimental and control group were taken into account when evaluating the students' monitored use of the tenses. The maximum possible score for the test was 72 points and its three parts required the students to supply a total of 36 items, each of which could be accorded from zero to two points, a solution that was reflective of the need to give credit to the forms the learners were not yet able to use consistently. The criteria used in the process of scoring were as follows:

- two points were given when the form supplied was entirely accurate and appropriate in a particular context, although minor spelling errors which did not influence the overall meaning of the sentence were not taken into account;
- an item was accorded one point when the form was inaccurate in some way (e.g. there was a problem with the auxiliary

or past participle, or the past tense form was faulty in some way), the simple aspect was confused with the progressive, or the grammatical judgment was accurate but the corrected version failed to eliminate the problem;

- no credit was given when the form was entirely incorrect (e.g. 'She has just coming back'), tense usage did not fit the context, a wrong grammatical judgment was made or no response whatsoever was provided.

The numerical data were subjected to quantitative analysis which involved calculating the means and the percentages of the maximum score for individual students and whole groups on the three tests as well as computing the relevant ranges and standard deviations. Since the scores were normally distributed, the statistical significance of the differences in the means of the experimental and control group on the successive tests was assessed by means of *paired* and *independent samples t-tests*, depending on the nature of the comparisons being conducted.

#### 5.2.6. Results and discussion

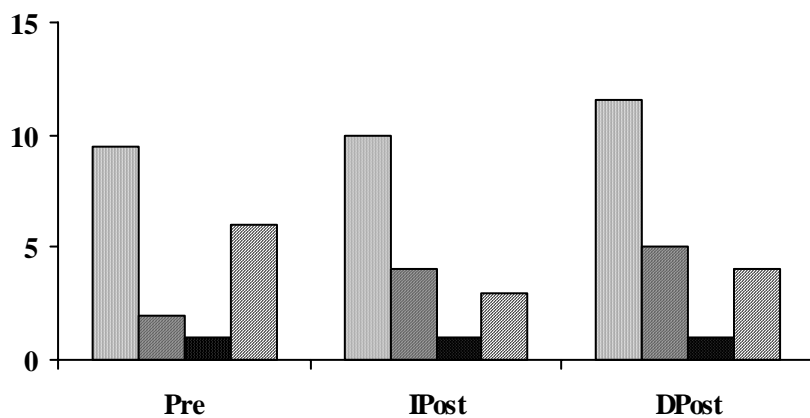
Figures 5.16. and 5.17. below diagrammatically represent the medians for the numbers of obligatory contexts for the use of the present perfect tenses created by the experimental and control students as well as the accurate, interlanguage and inaccurate forms produced in the two groups on the pretest (Pre) and the two post-tests (IPost and DPost). The graphical information is accompanied by precise median values for all these categories as well as the levels of statistical significance of the differences observed included in Tables 5.12. and 5.13. Even a cursory look at the data reveals that although the control students were superior in many respects to their experimental counterparts at the beginning of the study, a remarkable turnaround could be observed in the posttesting, which can testify to the effectiveness of the FFI provided.

For one thing, the subjects in the control group generated more utterances calling for the suppliance of the targeted feature on the pretest ( $C = 11.5$  vs.  $E = 9.5$ ) and the difference was statistically significant ( $U = 90.5$ ,  $p = .02$ ). However, the situation began to change right after the pedagogic intervention, with the medians being identical on the immediate posttest and the experimental students actually making more attempts at the use of the present

perfect simple and progressive on the delayed posttest ( $C = 8.5$  vs.  $E = 11.5$ ). Despite the fact that, considerable as it was, this difference was not statistically significant ( $U = 102.5$ ,  $p = .06$ ), the trends speak for themselves, with the experimental learners consistently generating more, and the control ones fewer, obligatory contexts on successive tests.

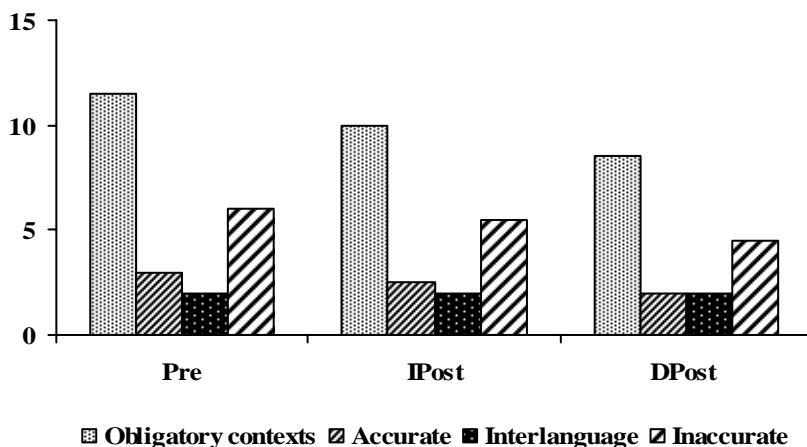
A similar pattern, albeit on a smaller scale, could be observed in the numbers of targetlike uses of the present perfect tenses. This is evidenced by the fact that although the experimental group median was initially slightly lower than that of the control group, it kept increasing on the immediate and delayed posttests and, in both cases, the pretest-posttest gains turned out to be statistically significant ( $W = 6$ ,  $p < .01$  for both Pre-IPost and IPost-DPost). At the same time, there was a drop in the number of accurate uses in the control group, and the differences between the two groups on both the immediate and delayed posttests also revealed high statistical significance ( $U = 72.5$ ,  $p < .01$  and  $U = 54$ ,  $p < .01$ , respectively).

Figure 5.16. The medians for the number of obligatory contexts, accurate,



■ Obligatory contexts ■ Accurate ■ Interlanguage ■ Inaccurate  
*interlanguage and inaccurate uses of present perfect tenses on the oral task in the experimental group.*

The situation is apparently much more complicated when it comes to the occurrence of inaccurate uses of the present perfect. This is because, in this case, the experimental group median dropped significantly ( $W = 141.5$ ,  $p < .01$ ) on the immediate posttest but the loss was only partly maintained on the delayed posttest, whereas the median for the control group was consistently lower on successive tests, even though the changes were never high enough to reach a statistically significant value. Even here, however, the difference between the two groups on the immediate posttest was considerable ( $C = 5.5$  vs.  $E = 3$ ), it reached statistical significance ( $U = 72.5$ ,  $p < .01$ ), and, what is more, it was partly retained on the final posttest. In addition, it could reasonably be argued that the eventual increase in the median for the number of incorrect uses of the present perfect tense in the experimental group was an unavoidable corollary of the growth in the number of obligatory contexts for its suppliance. Likewise, the simultaneous decrease in the use of such forms in the control group could easily be attributed to the fact that the students attempted to produce the target form much less frequently. As regards interlanguage forms medians, they remained unchanged in both groups throughout the experiment, but were slightly higher for the control learners each time a test was administered. While this could simply be interpreted as indicating that those students were somewhat more adventurous and willing to



*Figure 5.17. The medians for the number of obligatory contexts, accurate, interlanguage and inaccurate uses of present perfect tenses on the oral task in the control group.*

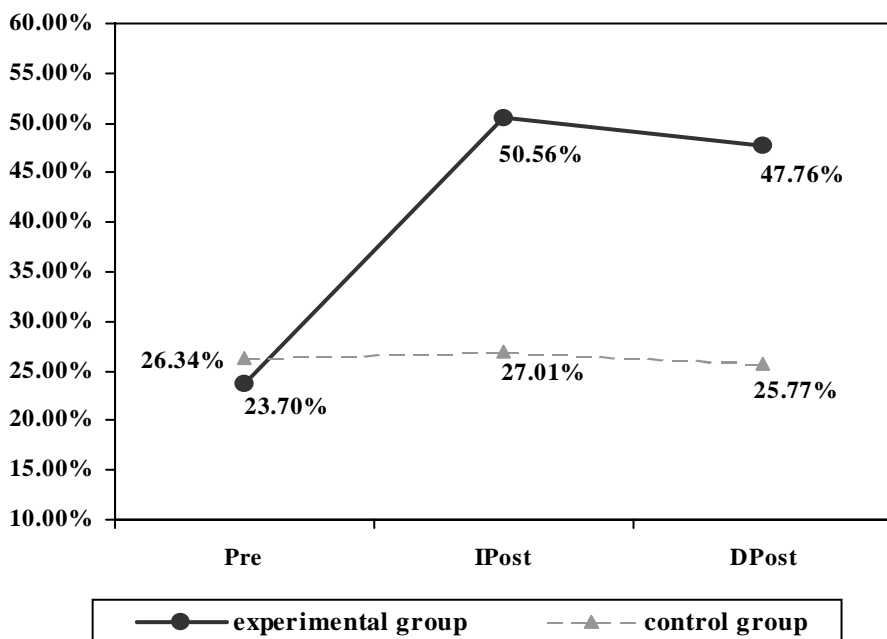
experiment with the target language, an equally plausible explanation could be that FFI was a decisive factor which enabled the experimental students to make a direct leap from inaccurate to fully target-like production of some forms.

While the findings pertaining to the frequency with which the subjects used the present perfect simple and progressive and the numbers of targetlike, emergent and inaccurate forms they produced are revealing, the full magnitude of the facilitative effect of the intervention on the learners' ability to use the structure in unplanned discourse only becomes clear when the fluctuations in the accuracy percentages for the experimental and control group are compared. As can be seen from Figure 5.18. and the pertinent rows and columns in Tables 5.12. and 5.13., a staggering, highly statistically significant 26.86% ( $W = 0$ ,  $p < .01$ ) pretest-immediate posttest gain could be observed in the experimental group and, even though this huge initial advantage had shrunk somewhat by the time the delayed posttest was administered, the loss was almost negligible and the ultimate increase in accuracy of as much as 24.06% was truly remarkable ( $W = 11$ ,  $p < .01$  for Pre-DPost). Such a situation contrasts sharply with the developments in the control group where the subjects also improved their accuracy by a meager and statistically insignificant 0.67% ( $W = 70$ ,  $p = .78$ ) on the immediate posttest, but then their performance deteriorated somewhat below the pretest average.

In the light of such conflicting trends, it should be hardly surprising that whereas there was no statistically significant difference in the performance of the two groups on the pretest ( $U = 165$ ,  $p = .92$ ), the advantage of the experimental students did become highly significant in the posttesting ( $U = 49.5$ ,  $p < .01$  for the IPost and  $U = 0$ ,  $p < .01$  for the DPost). These findings are even more compelling given the fact that the accuracy percentage in the control group was 2.64% higher than that of the experimental group prior to the provision of the instructional treatment, and it was 23.55% lower on the immediate posttest. Even though the gap was closed slightly in the course of time, the difference eventually stood at a remarkable 21.99%. Since the two classes were comparable in most respects, they were taught by the same teacher and worked on exactly the same materials in the five weeks separating the two posttests, it appears warranted to claim that the differences in their performance were the direct outcome of the intervention. Taken



together, these findings provide solid empirical evidence that not only did the combination of the FFI microoptions employed in this study lead to substantial improvement in the learners' ability to use the targeted structure in relatively free production, but also that the contributions of the intervention were largely durable.



*Figure 5.18. Accuracy percentages for the experimental and control students on the oral task (n = 18 for both groups).*

What merits a few sentences of explanation at this point is the slight improvement in the accuracy with which the controls produced the present perfect in the immediate posttesting. In all likelihood, this minimal initial gain can be ascribed to the fact that the completion of the pretest tasks might have aroused the students' curiosity and raised their awareness of the structure which, from their perspective, must have been of considerable interest to the teacher. In fact, the questions that several learners asked and their insistence on finding out whether the choices they had made on the test and the utterances they had created were correct indicated that some of them might reach for a grammar book or check a relevant website in order to clear up their doubts. However, at the time of the delayed posttest, the novelty had worn off and the fatigue effect

Category	Pretest	IPost	DPost	Nature of change	Significance (two-tailed Wilcoxon test) (a) Pre → IPost (b) IPost → DPost (c) Pre → DPost
<i>Experimental group (n = 18)</i>					
Obligatory contexts median	9.5	10	11.5	Gain, maintained (increased)	(a) $W = 69.5, p = .78$ n.s. (b) $W = 38, p = .23$ n.s. (c) $W = 36, p = .19$ n.s.
Accurate uses median	2	4	5	Gain, maintained (increased)	(a) $W = 6, p < .01$ (b) $W = 69.5, p = .78$ n.s. (c) $W = 6, p < .01$
Interlanguage uses mean	1	1	1	No change	(a) $W = 30, p = .17$ n.s. (b) $W = 48.5, p = .81$ n.s. (c) $W = 16.5, p < .01$
Inaccurate uses median	6	3	4	Loss, partly maintained (decreased)	(a) $W = 141.5, p < .01$ (b) $W = 28.5, p = .08$ n.s. (c) $W = 112.5, p = .02$
Accuracy percentage	23.70%	50.56%	47.76%	Gain, partly maintained (decreased)	(a) $W = 0, p < .01$ (b) $W = 97, p = .35$ n.s. (c) $W = 11, p < .01$
<i>Control group (n = 18)</i>					
Obligatory contexts median	11.5	10	8.5	Loss, maintained (increased)	(a) $W = 90, p = .02$ (b) $W = 83, p = .21$ n.s. (c) $W = 87, p < .01$
Accurate uses median	3	2.5	2	Loss, maintained	(a) $W = 98.5, p = .33$ n.s. (b) $W = 86.5, p = .68$ n.s. (c) $W = 41, p = .19$ n.s.
Interlanguage uses mean	2	2	2	No change	(a) $W = 51, p = .12$ n.s. (b) $W = 22.5, p = .64$ n.s. (c) $W = 60, p = .11$ n.s.
Inaccurate uses median	6	5.5	4.5	Loss, maintained (increased)	(a) $W = 113, p = .09$ n.s. (b) $W = 76, p = .71$ n.s. (c) $W = 66.5, p = .17$ n.s.
Accuracy percentage	26.34%	27.01%	25.77%	Gain, not maintained	(a) $W = 70, p = .78$ n.s. (b) $W = 80, p = .89$ n.s. (c) $W = 65, p = .80$ n.s.

*Table 5.12. The effect of the instructional treatment on the experimental and control subjects' use of the present perfect on the oral task (n = 18).*

	Obligatory contexts	Accurate Uses	Interlanguage uses	Inaccurate uses	Accuracy percentage
Pretest	$U = 90.5$ $p = .02$	$U = 194.5$ $p = .29$ n.s.	$U = 262.5$ $p < .01$	$U = 159$ $p = .92$ n.s.	$U = 165$ $p = .92$ n.s.
Immediate posttest	$U = 157$ $p = .87$ n.s.	$U = 72.5$ $p < .01$	$U = 207$ $p = .13$ n.s.	$U = 245.5$ $p < .01$	$U = 49.5$ $p < .01$
Delayed posttest	$U = 102.5$ $p = .06$ n.s.	$U = 54$ $p < .01$	$U = 182.5$ $p = .49$ n.s.	$U = 193.5$ $p = .31$ n.s.	$U = 75$ $p < .01$

*Table 5.13. Statistical significance of the differences in the performance of the experimental and control students on the oral task assessed by means of two-tailed Mann-Whitney test ( $n = 18$ ).*

had apparently set in, with some of the students being visibly bored with having to complete almost identical tasks one more time. Predictably, very similar reactions, albeit on a larger scale, could be observed among the experimental students who were truly fed up with performing similar activities over and over again and were thus unlikely to seek opportunities for further practice with the present perfect. The fact that they remained much more accurate on the delayed posttest in comparison with the pretest despite the presence of such sentiments undoubtedly speaks to the effectiveness of the FFI provided.

The numerical analysis of the test scores demonstrated that the treatment also had a beneficial effect on the development of the experimental students' explicit knowledge, although, in this case, the improvement was somewhat less spectacular. As can be seen from Figure 5.19., which graphically represents the mean changes on successive tests as well as Tables 5.14. and 5.15., in which the relevant numerical data and assessments of statistical significance can be found, the subjects in the experimental group improved by 8.28 points or 11.5% on the immediate posttest in comparison with the pretest, a difference that was highly statistically significant ( $t = 8.67$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Even though, similarly to the oral task, the initial gain failed to be maintained in the long run and their performance deteriorated by 2.33 points (3.24%) when the last posttest was

administered, the Pre-DPost increase was still substantial and, amounting to 5.95 points or 8.26%, it also revealed the required level of significance ( $t = 5.76, p < .01$ ). Thus, also in this case, it is possible to talk about the impact of FFI being quite durable. By and large, then, the prevalent tendencies on the written measure mirrored those on the oral task, the only difference lying in the fact that the improvement was definitely more modest in this case. As regards the control students, the situation differed somewhat from that observed on the oral task, in that the minute initial advantage was absent and the losses suffered in the long term proved to be much more severe. More precisely, the mean score in this group decreased by 3.22 points (4.47%) on the immediate posttest and a further 2.97 points (4.13%) on the delayed posttest, with the overall loss equaling 6.19 points (8.6%) and all the between-test differences reaching a significance value (see Table 5.14.).

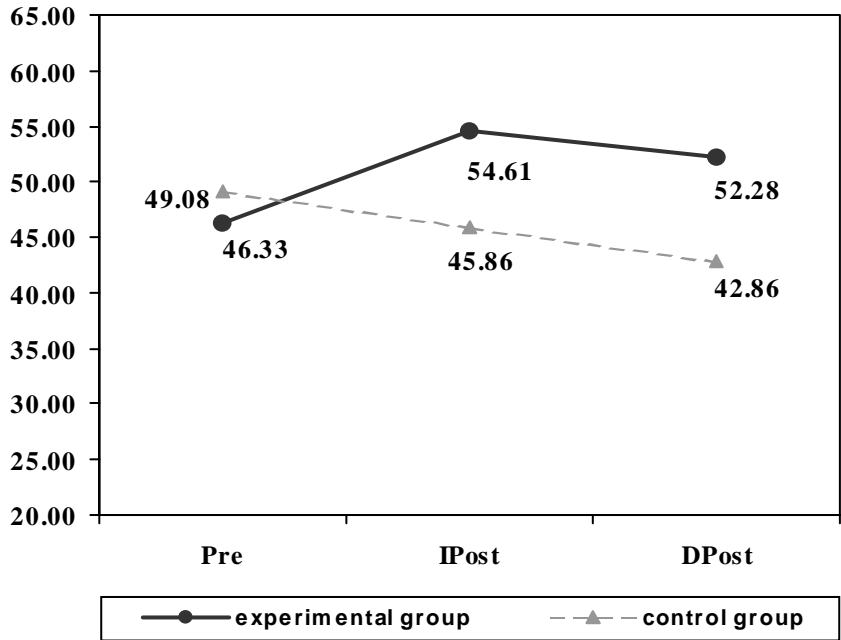


Figure 5.19. The mean scores for the experimental and control students on the test ( $n = 36$  for both groups).

When we compare the mean scores of the experimental and control groups on the successive tests, the benefits of FFI prove to be even more unambiguous. This is because, as was the case with

the oral task, the control subjects outperformed the experimental ones by 2.75 points (3.82%) on the pretest, and, although the difference did not reach significance ( $t = 0.94$ ,  $p = .35$ ), it indicated that they had a somewhat better grasp of the relevant rules and were better able to apply them in text-manipulation activities. However, the results of the immediate posttest administered right after the pedagogic intervention revealed that the initial tendencies had been reversed, with the mean score in the experimental group (54.61) being 8.75 points or 12.25% higher than its equivalent in the control group (45.86), an effect that reached statistical significance ( $t = 3.16$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Moreover, instead of diminishing over time, the gap actually widened to 9.39 points (13.04%), which constitutes powerful evidence that the instructional treatment did indeed contribute to the growth of the experimental subjects' explicit knowledge, not only immediately after the intervention but also in the longer term.

	Mean	%	SD	R	Significance (two-tailed paired $t$ -test)
<i>Experimental group (n = 36)</i>					
Pretest	46.33	64.35	11.74	43	n.a.
Immediate posttest	54.61	75.85	10.44	43	Pre $\rightarrow$ IPost: $t = 8.67$ , $p < .01$
Delayed posttest	52.28	72.61	10.30	40	IPost $\rightarrow$ DPost: $t = 2.51$ , $p = .02$ Pre $\rightarrow$ DPost: $t = 5.76$ , $p < .01$
<i>Control group (n = 36)</i>					
Pretest	49.08	68.17	12.96	45	n.a.
Immediate posttest	45.86	63.70	12.90	49	Pre $\rightarrow$ IPost: $t = 3.07$ , $p < .01$
Delayed posttest	42.89	59.57	13.91	45	IPost $\rightarrow$ DPost: $t = 4.00$ , $p < .01$ Pre $\rightarrow$ DPost: $t = 5.02$ , $p < .01$

*Table 5.14. The mean scores, standard deviations, ranges and levels of statistical significance on the test for the experimental and control group (n = 36 for both groups).*

	Experimental group summary (n = 36)	Control group summary (n = 36)	Significance (two-tailed <i>t</i> -test for independent samples)
Pretest	Mean: 46.33 SD: 11.74	Mean: 49.08 SD: 12.96	$t = 0.94, p = .35$ n.s
Immediate posttest	Mean: 54.61 SD: 10.44	Mean: 45.86 SD: 12.90	$t = 3.16, p < .01$
Delayed Posttest	Mean: 52.28 SD: 10.30	Mean: 42.89 SD: 13.91	$t = 3.26, p < .01$

*Table 5.15. Assessment of levels of statistical significance in the performance of the experimental and control group on the test (n = 36 for both groups).*

Before moving on to discuss the remaining research areas that the study sought to investigate, two important issues that emerged from the analysis of the test scores deserve to be addressed in more detail. In the first place, it may be somewhat surprising that the effect of the treatment was more visible in the case of relatively spontaneous language use than in the highly controlled test exercises, and, thus, it stands to reason that the intervention had exerted a more profound impact on the development of implicit rather than explicit knowledge. Logically, the opposite should be the case or, at the very least, the gains on tasks requiring the use of a specific feature in planned and unplanned discourse should be comparable. Although several viable explanations could be offered for the findings reported above, one that most readily comes to mind is that the test required the use of the present perfect tenses with predetermined verbs in a variety of contexts contrived by the teacher, some of which were quite difficult and may have been beyond the capabilities of some of the students. By contrast, when performing the communicative task, the students had a lot of freedom in choosing the lexis and the types of uses to which the tense can be put, and they could have simply avoided the meanings and contexts that they found particularly problematic. In addition, the format of this task might have enabled the learners to rely on readily accessible lexical units rather than the application of the

rules, a possibility which will be explored in greater detail later in this section. It should also be kept in mind that the initial levels of performance on the written test were much higher than those on the oral task and, given the formal and functional complexity of the structure, there was a limit on the magnitude of improvement that FFI could bring about at this particular point.

The second issue that merits closer consideration is the fact that, somewhat in contrast to the oral task, the performance of the controls kept deteriorating after the pretest and the eventual pretest-delayed posttest loss was so substantial. In fact, in this case as well, it is the diverse demands posed by the spoken and written measure as well as the relatively high initial mean score that can be identified as the main culprits. Thus, even though paying greater attention to the structure and, possibly, consulting some grammar reference books was to some extent sufficient to bring about a slight Pre-IPost increase on the open-ended oral task, much more systematic and enduring efforts would have been necessary to produce a similar effect on the more comprehensive and more demanding written measure.

GROUP	Pretest		Immediate posttest		Delayed posttest	
	E	C	E	C	E	C
self-corrections	9	12	35 <sup>1 S</sup>	11	33 <sup>1 S</sup>	12
<i>successful</i>	4	6	22 <sup>1 S</sup>	6	26 <sup>1 S</sup>	6
<i>unsuccessful</i>	5	6	13	5	7	6
peer-corrections	1	4	5	2	5	2
<i>successful</i>	1	3	4	2	5	1
<i>unsuccessful</i>	0	1	1	0	0	1
overgeneralization errors	3	2	10	4	15	4

\* The number in the upper index indicates the presence of a statistically significant difference between successive tests with  $p < .05$ , with its level assessed by means of the two-tailed Wilcoxon test; 1 stands for the comparison with the pretest and 2 with the immediate posttest. The letter 'S' in the upper index indicates the existence of a statistically significant difference between the experimental and control group assessed with the help of the two-tailed Mann-Whitney test.

*Table 5.16. Self-corrections, peer-corrections and overgeneralizations in the speech of experimental and control students on the oral task.*

Apart from contributing to the experimental students' superior performance on the oral communication task and the written discrete-point test, the pedagogic intervention also had a beneficial effect on their awareness of the targeted form and their ability to monitor their spoken production, as reflected in the considerable increase in the incidence of self-repair and peer-corrections. As illustrated in Table 5.16., the number of self-corrections increased almost fourfold from the pretest to the immediate posttest (9 as opposed to 35) and, although it dropped somewhat on the delayed posttest (33), a huge and statistically significant gain was still maintained in comparison with the pretest ( $W = 88$ ,  $p < .01$ ). The results of the analysis are even more encouraging when it comes to the instances of successful self-repair, defined as situations where the students not only initiated a repair sequence but were ultimately able to modify their output and produce an utterance that was accurate, meaningful and appropriate in a specific context. While there were merely 4 such cases on the pretest, the number jumped to 22 immediately after the treatment and climbed to 26 five weeks after that, with both of the pretest-posttest gains reaching a significance value ( $W = 0$ ,  $p < .01$  in both cases).

Although the increase in the overall frequency of attempts at self-repair was accompanied by a rise in the number of instances of unsuccessful uptake on the immediate posttest, the trend did not persist in the long run and the incidence of such cases on the delayed posttest barely exceeded the pretest level. Besides, it should be hardly surprising that the more frequently students try to make adjustments to their output, the greater the likelihood that some of their endeavors will not meet with success. Surely, in the case of the participants of the present study, the short-term increase in the number of unsuccessful self-corrections constituted evidence that they were more cognizant of the accuracy and appropriateness of their speech, and it was a very low price to be paid for honing the students' monitoring skills.

The assumption that FFI resulted in increased awareness of the targeted structure on the part of the experimental students is further substantiated if we take into account the tendencies for self-correction which obtained in the control group. As the data included in Table 5.16. clearly demonstrate, there were few differences in the occurrence of different types of self-repair in this case, and none of these was statistically significant. Moreover, although the learners in



this class were initially more likely to notice and fix problems in their output, a dramatic turnaround could be observed on the two posttests, with the experimental students not just catching up but in fact surpassing their counterparts in all the pertinent categories. This was perhaps most conspicuous on the delayed posttest, where they made almost three times as many attempts at self-repair as the controls and were over four times as successful, both of which differences revealed statistical significance ( $U = 76$ ,  $p < .01$  for all instances of self-repair and  $U = 64$ ,  $p < .01$  for those involving successful uptake).

Some support for the awareness-raising function of the treatment can also be found in the fluctuations in the numbers of peer-corrections, but here the evidence is much more tenuous. While it is true that the experimental students grew somewhat more likely to point out or correct errors in the oral production of their peers from one test to the next and the reverse could be observed for the controls, the fluctuations were minute and they failed to reveal a significance. Still, given the long-standing reluctance of learners to engage in peer-correction, even these modest increases cannot be dismissed out of hand as they may have been indicative of consistent trends that would have become more pronounced had another delayed posttest been administered.

Although attempting to pinpoint the components and properties of the instructional treatment that were responsible for the experimental subjects becoming more aware of the present perfect tense and engaging in greater and more successful monitoring can only be speculative in nature, it is still possible to offer some plausible explanations in this respect. It could be argued, for example, that such an effect was the direct outcome of the application of the dictogloss tasks, the successful completion of which required the learners to reflect on their own output as well as that of their peers. Since, as mentioned above, the students found this activity extremely engaging and did their utmost to meticulously reconstruct the texts, it stands to reason that the useful experience was so memorable that the strategies which proved helpful in its performance were transferred to the oral tasks used in the posttesting. Another logical possibility is that it is the negotiation of form that the experimental subjects were pushed to engage in each time they made an error involving the form or use of the present perfect that led to their greater awareness of the feature in the long run. After

all, it is rather uncontroversial that this type of error correction is likely to be sufficiently salient to the learner and can lead to higher levels of successful uptake than many other types of corrective feedback (cf. Lyster 2001; Panova and Lyster 2002). Logically, the complex cognitive operations involved in spotting the teacher's corrective move, noticing the deviant form and making an attempt to fix the problem may leave some kind of trace in the learner's mind and enhance the likelihood that he or she will resort to similar strategies when performing similar tasks in the future. Finally, it could simply have been the specific combination of the FFI techniques or the cumulative effect of the intensive and massed intervention that helped the students proceduralize their explicit, declarative knowledge to such an extent that it could be readily accessed in real-time task performance and enabled output modifications. In fact, the conscious rule-knowledge could have become so automatic that it not only permitted more frequent and effective monitoring but also served as a sufficient basis for using the target form accurately in unplanned discourse, a phenomenon that was explored empirically by Yuan and Ellis (2003). The implications of such a possibility will be touched upon later in this section.

Despite the fact that the findings discussed thus far are very positive and seem to auger well for FFI, there are also such which should make us circumspect about taking its benefits for granted. The first problem that emerges from the analysis of the spoken data is the increase in the occurrence of overgeneralization errors that can be traced back to intensive exposure to and use of the present perfect simple and progressive. As can be seen from Table 5.16., the number of such instances in the experimental group kept growing very consistently on successive tests to eventually be five times as high on the delayed posttest as on the pretest, while it remained relatively stable in the control group. Even though the rise never reached a significance value and not every student committed an error of this kind, the tendency is striking and could have continued beyond the administration of the last posttest. Much as such a phenomenon could have been expected given the frequency of the targeted form in the input and the restructuring of the interlanguage that the teaching of the present perfect is bound to effect (cf. Bardovi-Harlig 2001), it does show that increased consistency in the use of one structure can entail at least a temporary drop in the accurate uses of structures which are formally, semantically or function-

ally similar. Therefore, caution should be exercised when planning and implementing remedial teaching of this kind, and steps should be taken to ensure that it is incorporated into a more comprehensive scheme that would also focus on the forms most likely to be destabilized by the intervention.

Perhaps a much more important observation is related to the type of knowledge of the target structure that the instructional treatment helped develop and that the subjects drew upon when completing the pretest and posttest tasks. Given the difficulty and variety of the items included in the test, it is quite uncontroversial that the improvement in performance in the experimental students was attributable to the systematic growth in their conscious knowledge of the relevant rules as well as its greater proceduralization and automatization. On the face of it, it would also seem that the more accurate and consistent use of the present perfect on the oral task that could be observed on the immediate posttest and was largely maintained at the end of the experiment was the outcome of the students incorporating the feature into their implicit representation, with the effect that they found it easier to deploy it in relatively spontaneous communication. However, there are a few problems with the latter interpretation.

Firstly, the qualitative analysis of the recordings and transcripts demonstrated that some utterances including the present perfect simple and progressive such as 'What have you been doing?', 'I haven't seen you for a long time' or 'I have just come back' appeared very frequently in the students' output, accounting for a large proportion of the total number of the obligatory contexts on all the tests. Moreover, in the vast majority of cases, such contributions were not only accurate and appropriate, but they were also produced with great ease which cannot be said about many other instances where the use of the tenses was attempted. Consequently, there are grounds to assume that on many occasions the subjects were relying on their memory-based rather than rule-based systems, and that it could have been item learning rather than system learning that mainly contributed to improved performance in the posttesting. While, as explained in the discussion of the acquisition of the passive in section 5.1.8. above, this kind of learning is also beneficial for a number of reasons, its effect is limited in the sense that, in the short term, it only affects the lexical items and contexts that were

the focus of instruction, and does not contribute to greater creativity in the use of the targeted structure.

Another point that needs to be addressed is the fact that, as noted above, there were numerous occasions on which especially the less advanced subjects took considerable time to produce the structure, particularly when they apparently had to fall back on the rule-based system, which indicates that they were constantly monitoring its production and necessarily relying on their explicit knowledge for that purpose.<sup>11</sup> Obviously, even if this interpretation is accurate, the ability to utilize highly proceduralized explicit representation is undeniably an asset that aids communication and can push the acquisition process forward in the long run. This would also show, however, that the growth of the implicit knowledge store in the case of formally and functionally difficult structures might be an arduous and lengthy process.

Lastly, the qualitative analysis yielded numerous instances of intra-learner variability, with some subjects being inconsistent both about the form and the use of the present perfect in the space of the same or a few adjacent turns. Given the random and inconsistent character of explicit knowledge (see Chapter Three, section 3.3.), this finding provides additional evidence for the assumption that it was this type of mental representation that underpinned much of the creative use of the structure, particularly in the output of the less proficient students. Taken together, all of these findings indicate that the improvement in the use of the present perfect tenses in unplanned discourse cannot be treated as unequivocal evidence that the instruction did in fact alter the sequence of acquisition, and led to a certain amount of system learning in the students who were not developmentally ready to acquire the feature. Nonetheless, this is not to say that the treatment was ineffective, but, rather, that its effects were compatible with what the learners had been capable of doing prior to the treatment, and that teachers should not be overly optimistic in estimating the outcomes of their regular pedagogic interventions.

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<sup>11</sup> One factor that could have contributed to the students deliberating so much about the forms they were producing was the format of the oral task. As mentioned above, providing learners at this level with prompts in Polish may occasionally lead to literal translation of phrases and sentences and this is exactly what some students were observed doing in their performance of the activity.

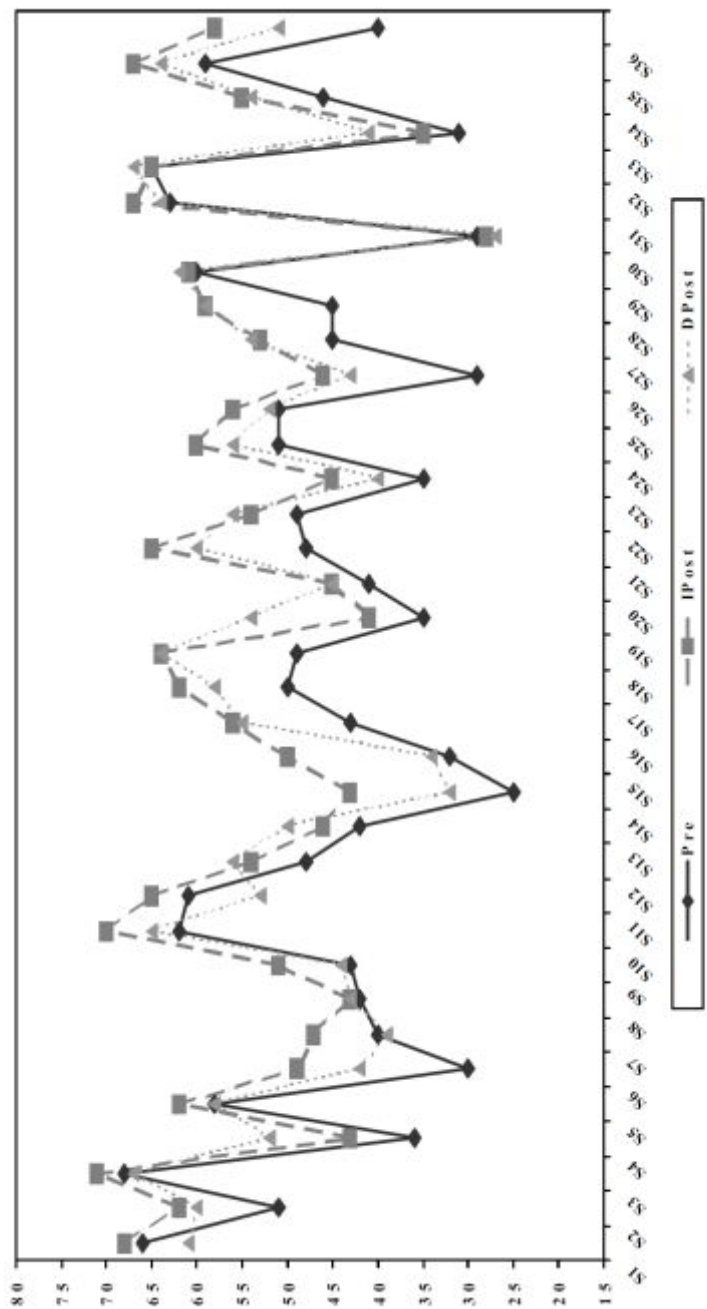


Figure 5.20. Mean scores for individual experimental subjects on the test ( $n = 36$ ).

Finally, a few comments are in order on the relationship between the provision of FFI and the degree of individual variation displayed by the experimental students. Let us first inspect the individual scores as well as the ranges and standard deviations for the three written measures which are presented in Figure 5.20. and Table 5.14., respectively. What does inspire considerable enthusiasm is that, with the exception of two students (S30 and S32), all of the experimental subjects improved on the immediate posttest in comparison with the pretest, and only in the case of 5 learners (S1, S3, S7, S11 and S30) did the delayed posttest scores fall below the initial levels. In addition, except for S11, the deterioration in performance was usually minute, it did not exceed one or two points and it was more likely to affect the subjects whose initial scores were rather high prior to the treatment. At the same time, there were quite a few experimental subjects who improved by 10 points or more from the pretest to the delayed posttest (i.e. S4, S6, S18, S19, S21, S26, S28, S33 and S34) and, in most such cases, the initial scores were below the group mean, which indicates that instruction proved to be particularly beneficial for weaker students. On the other hand, however, the changes in the values of the measures of

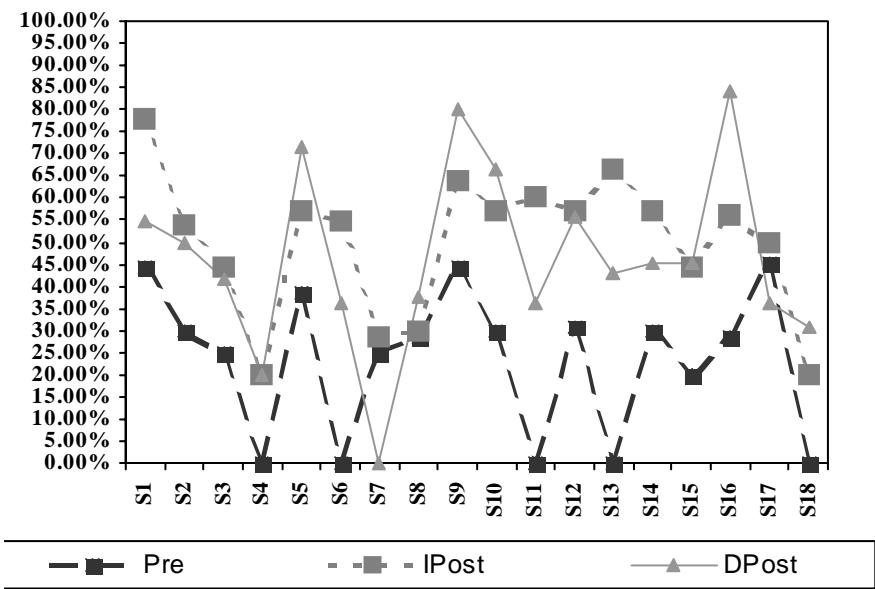


Figure 5.21. Accuracy percentages for individual subjects in the experimental group on the oral task (n = 18).

	Pretest	Immediate posttest	Delayed posttest
Range	45.45	57.78	84.21
Standard deviation	16.43	15.97	20.68

*Table 5.17. Ranges and standard deviations for the experimental group on the oral task (n = 18).*

dispersion were rather small, with the range dropping from 43 on the pretest to 40 on the delayed posttest, and the standard deviation decreasing from 11.74 to 10.30 in the same period. This shows that, on the whole, the intervention had a limited effect on diminishing the extent of individual variation in the use of the present perfect, which is not surprising given the substantial heterogeneity of the class at the beginning of the experiment.

Such patterns are even more pronounced when we focus on the disparities in the spoken performance of the experimental students and examine the relevant data included in Figure 5.21. and Table 5.17. In this case, all the subjects became more accurate in their use of the present perfect on the immediate posttest when compared with the pretest, and eight of them had improved by more than 30% on the delayed posttest (i.e. S5, S6, S9, S10, S11, S13, S16 and S18). What is even more encouraging, there were students who, having failed to produce even one correct instance of the feature on the pretest, improved their standing at the end of the experiment, with the lowest gain equaling 20%. Promising as they might be, the overall positive findings have to be viewed with circumspection in the light of the fact that the students differed greatly in the number of attempts to generate the present perfect, and, in some cases, one or two accurate uses more or less could have resulted in an impressive rise in the accuracy percentage that may not have been reflective of a spectacular growth in the learner's command of the structure. This is exactly how we should interpret the abrupt drop in the accuracy percentage of S7 who produced so few instances of the present perfect that several errors, some of which may have been mere slips of the tongue, resulted in a huge Pre-DPost deterioration in performance.

In addition, the gap between the best and the worst subjects not only did not narrow but in fact widened, as evidenced by the huge increase in the value of the range from 45.45 on the pretest to 84.21 on the delayed posttest. A similar trend obtained for the standard deviation, which dropped somewhat on the immediate posttest only to shoot up in the delayed posttesting, and, ultimately, be 4.25 higher than at the outset. This shows very clearly that although the instructional treatment proved to be effective for the class as a whole and resulted in sizable accuracy gains, it did little to eliminate individual variation and ultimately contributed to its growth. While there might be many reasons for such a state of affairs, one plausible explanation could lie in the fact that the acquisition of the present perfect unavoidably entails the restructuring of the interlanguage system, and the amount of time learners need to put all the pieces where they belong varies depending on their stage of interlanguage development at the time FFI is provided.

To summarize what has been said in this section, the instructional treatment which spanned four 45-minute English lessons and took the form of a combination of implicit and explicit instructional microoptions resulted in considerable and statistically significant pretest-immediate posttest gains in the experimental group on both oral and written measures. Although part of the initial advantage was lost in the long run, the experimental subjects' performance on the delayed posttest was still superior to that at the beginning of the experiment. By contrast, in spite of being slightly better at the beginning of the experiment, the control students failed to improve their performance and they did statistically significantly worse on the successive posttests than their experimental counterparts. While the gains on the written test can unambiguously be ascribed to the development of the experimental learners' explicit knowledge, their improvement in relatively spontaneous communication cannot be fully accounted for in terms of interlanguage change and the growth of implicit knowledge. This is because there is some evidence that it is item rather than system learning that could have taken place, there was a lot of variability in the speech of individual learners, and some of the students appeared to be relying on their conscious rule knowledge in producing output. A much more clear-cut benefit of FFI was the greater awareness of the present perfect simple and continuous as well as enhanced monitoring, as reflected in the increase in the number of self-corrections, instances of successful



uptake and, to a lesser extent, peer-corrections. Finally, although most of the students benefited from the intervention to a greater or lesser extent, it did little to eliminate inter-subject variation and, in fact, aggravated the problem by making the class more diverse in this respect than it was prior to the treatment.

## Conclusion

The main aim of the present chapter has been to relate the diverse theoretical positions and research findings discussed in the preceding parts of this work to classroom instruction as it is provided in the Polish educational context. As was made clear in the introduction, undertaking such an attempt is fully warranted in the light of the striking paucity of empirical investigations into the effectiveness of FFI in Poland as well as the dangers necessarily involved in making failsafe pedagogic recommendations on the basis of the results of research conducted in second language contexts which afford learners immeasurably greater amounts of TL exposure. Thus, it is clearly indispensable to carry out relevant studies in settings to which their findings will eventually be applied, as not only is it bound to expand researchers' knowledge about the value of different instructional options and clusters thereof, but also to provide a sound basis for offering feasible provisional specifications. The utility of such tentative proposals, in turn, can be verified by practitioners in their own, unique classrooms.

In recognition of this need, the present chapter was devoted to reporting the findings of two research projects which were conducted in Polish former secondary school and sought to determine the impact of FFI on the acquisition of three grammatical features that learners invariably find problematic, namely the English past tense morphology, passive constructions and the present perfect simple and progressive. The researcher being the regular classroom teacher in both cases, the studies can be regarded as examples of action research, and both of them investigated the contributions of clusters of instructional options rather than single techniques. The main strength of these investigations was connected with the fact that they were conducted during naturally occurring lessons in intact classes, they involved measures of the learners' ability to deploy the targeted features in both planned and unplanned discourse, and

included both immediate and delayed posttests. As a consequence of such characteristics, their findings are of more immediate relevance to teachers working in similar instructional contexts, it was possible to explore the development of both explicit and implicit knowledge, and to determine whether the benefits of the instructional treatment were retained over time.

Generally speaking, the subjects in both studies appeared to benefit from the pedagogic intervention, although the nature and scope of the improvement was a function of the inherent properties of the structure, the learners' stage of interlanguage development as well as the type of performance in which the students were required to engage. Thus, as could be seen in the the case of the past tense and the passive, the impact of FFI was likely to be greater and more permanent when the structure was formally simple, the form-meaning-function mappings were relatively straightforward, and the learners were either developmentally ready to acquire it or needed to gain greater control of the implicit knowledge they already possessed. What is of great relevance from the perspective of the classroom teacher, in such cases, instruction not only aided the weaker students in catching up with the rest of the class, but also contributed to somewhat diminishing the degree of individual variation between learners. By contrast, when the structure was more demanding and the learners still experienced considerable difficulty using it accurately in controlled text-manipulation activities, the class as a whole was more likely to remain heterogeneous, the gains in performance invariably turned out to be slightly less durable and the nature of the learning taking place also seemed to differ.

This brings us to the question of the effect of instruction on the subjects' explicit and implicit knowledge of the target features, as reflected in their employment thereof in planned discourse and real-time communication. Although, quite surprisingly, the students tended to improve more in spontaneous than monitored language production, there are grounds to suspect that, particularly in the case of the passive and the present perfect, a substantial part of these gains could be attributed to reliance on lexical units and sentence fragments as well as automatized explicit knowledge. Also, the more open-ended nature of the oral tasks made it possible for the subjects to adroitly avoid the forms and uses which they found problematic, which resulted in increased accuracy. Obviously, all of this only means that the subjects who had not reached the requisite stage of

interlanguage development did not necessarily rely on the implicit rule-based system for producing output under time pressure and cannot serve as a justification for downplaying or dismissing altogether the overall beneficial effect of FFI. In fact, this advantageous impact manifested itself not only in superior performance on the tasks but also in the subjects' enhanced awareness of all the forms investigated, as reflected in the greater incidence of self- and peer-corrections. Additionally, the increased exposure to the features and their sustained use in a range of tasks over the period of several lessons did not result in a substantial increase in the number of overgeneralization errors, although the tendencies for the present perfect in this respect were somewhat disturbing.

Since the rationale behind the research projects reported in this chapter is inextricably connected with the need to offer feasible recommendations that would respect the specificity of the Polish educational context, these concluding remarks would surely be incomplete without a brief mention of the implications of the findings for classroom practice. For one thing, remedial teaching such as this that was provided in the two studies requires that the choice of the instructional microoptions should be congruent with the status of a specific form in the learners' interlanguage. This is because it would make little sense, for example, to inundate students with countless transformation, translation or gap-filling exercises when they have developed and proceduralized the requisite explicit knowledge of a structure and only experience difficulty using it accurately in spontaneous communication. Conversely, little benefit would probably accrue from opting for the application of implicit FFI techniques in situations where the learners have not yet grasped the pertinent rules and do not have ample exposure to the feature outside the classroom. In other words, teachers need to identify the learning challenge, which obviously also entails deciding whether it is the structural, semantic or pragmatic dimension which poses the most serious learning problems (cf. Larsen-Freeman 2001a, 2003). Another lesson to be learnt from the research findings is that if the intervention is to bring the expected benefits, it should be both intensive and massed so that students are provided with multiple opportunities to notice the structure in the input and employ it in their own output in a relatively short period of time, as well as varied, to avoid the premature onset of fatigue and tedium. While the latter is germane to any instructional setting and any task human

beings undertake, the former appears to be particularly relevant in foreign language contexts where students cannot be expected to gain much natural TL exposure.

Teachers also need to be aware of the fact that the pedagogic intervention they devise should be part of a broader instructional agenda rather than a one-shot undertaking. As noted elsewhere, FFI directed at a particular feature may sometimes destabilize a number of related forms in the learners' interlanguage and, thus, it might be necessary to consolidate the implicit and explicit knowledge thereof once the remedial treatment has been completed. As regards the effects of instruction *per se*, practitioners need to be aware that frequent occurrence of a structure in learners' output does not at all times constitute evidence that it has been fully integrated into the IL system, since some utterances could be learnt lexically or be the outcome of dexterous application of consciously learnt rules. Even though, contrary to what Pienemann (1989) might advocate, it is impossible to determine the exact developmental stage at which learners can be placed and tailor the intervention to their needs, their constant reliance on a very limited set of fixed phrased or halting and deliberate production are usually a sign that more communicative practice is necessary for the automatization of implicit representation to take place.

Finally, there is a need to temper out expectations and be prepared for the instructional treatment to work less admirably than we would have hoped. After all, the fact that the combinations of techniques employed in the two studies turned out to be effective does not mean that they would have done their job equally well with other classes and other local teaching-learning situations, a cautionary note that applies to any technique or procedure we resolve to experiment with in classroom practice (cf. Ellis 1998; Larsen-Freeman 2003). For example, while the participants of the two studies held positive attitudes towards English and were willing to learn it, there is no guarantee that less motivated learners would have responded to the treatment in comparable ways. And, of course, there remain all the complexities of classroom discourse, the role of the teacher as well as the multitude of individual learner differences, all of which are factors that may ultimately determine the success or failure of FFI.

Obviously, the pedagogical implications discussed above are directly related to the two research projects the findings of which

were presented in this chapter and, therefore, they can only be fragmentary and cannot possibly deal with all the choices involved in teaching formal aspects of language in Polish schools. A set of more comprehensive and detailed guidelines of this kind can be found in the conclusion to the present work alongside directions for further research into the realm of form-focused instruction in the Polish educational context.



## Conclusions, pedagogical implications and directions for future research

It is perhaps correct to say that from the perspective of an average foreign language teacher working in the Polish educational context, the question concerning the place of form-focused instruction in the curriculum hardly deserves to be seriously contemplated. This is because grammar teaching is the norm rather than exception in the vast majority of language classrooms, both in the case of older elementary school children, language learners in junior and senior high schools as well as university students. While multifarious influences could be identified to account for such a state of affairs, it mainly seems to be the outcome of teachers' and students' deeply-ingrained belief systems and learning experiences, limited numbers of language lessons, meager opportunities for out-of-school exposure, various institutional constraints, and the important place that grammatical structures continue to occupy in popular coursebooks and teaching materials. Even though the sweeping reform of the format of the foreign language examinations administered at the end of senior high school and the simultaneous changes in their requirements and grading criteria shifted the focus from grammatical accuracy to fluency and communicative effectiveness, this does not seem to have brought about far-reaching changes in teaching methods and strategies. This does not mean, of course, that such an effect will not eventually manifest itself in increased reliance on the experiential teaching strategy and diminished emphasis on analysis as the main pedagogic tool. Welcome as such a reshuffling of instructional priorities would undoubtedly prove to be, too abrupt a swing of the methodological pendulum might in fact do more harm than good, with learners developing communicative ability to the detriment of accuracy, coherence and precision, a point that we will return to at the end of these concluding remarks.

The tenacity of the attachment to form-focused instruction is also the direct outcome of the widespread assumption that grammar is much easier to teach than the other language skills or subsystems, and, also, that it is relatively unproblematic to tap students' knowledge of grammatical structures. After all, some teachers could won-

der, what could be easier than acquainting learners with the relevant rule, asking them to do the more or less controlled activities from the coursebook, and, possibly, supplying them with additional completion, translation or transformation exercises from one grammar practice book or another. In such a situation, two or three lessons could be devoted to having learners read out the sentences in lockstep, correcting their errors, and, should this prove necessary, restating the rule and clearing up the doubts that might come up. In some cases, the learners could also be requested to perform a simple role-play activity involving the use of the targeted construction or respond to some text-related questions with its help. Very similar procedures could then be drawn upon during review classes, the only exception being that a range of different features would come into focus. Finally, a discrete-point test could be administered, which would in all likelihood mainly consist of a variety of text-manipulation activities.

While no claim is being made that all grammar teaching in Polish schools proceeds in such a traditional way, there are grounds to assume that this is exactly what transpires in many classrooms at very different educational levels. Such a picture emerges both from the present author's investigations into Polish teachers' preferences in FFI (Pawlak in press), the numerous recordings and observations of classroom discourse he has made in the course of other research projects, the feedback he receives from secondary school graduates attending methodology classes, and, equally importantly, his own considerable experience as a language teacher. Obviously, if the characterization provided above is consistent with classroom reality, the prospects of learners developing implicit knowledge of target language grammar are indeed rather bleak. Since it is this tacit, procedural type of mental representation that enables fluent and effective everyday communication, instruction of this kind is likely to aggravate rather than alleviate the inert knowledge problem (Larsen-Freeman 2003). As a consequence, learners will be able to apply grammar rules in text-manipulation activities, but fail to harness them in the service of meaning and message conveyance, intended to attain authentic communicative goals outside the classroom.

It is such apparent lack of understanding of the nature of grammar, scant familiarity with the dimensions of grammatical knowledge and use, the growing uncertainty about the place of



form-focused instruction in the language curriculum, and the frequent application of rather ineffective techniques and procedures in its provision that have prompted the author to embark on the task of producing the present work. Apart from contributing to the ongoing debate on the role of grammar teaching in foreign language pedagogy and expanding the technical knowledge necessary for the advancement of the field of SLA, the major aim of this book has been to address such problems by exploring a range of issues related to the utility of form-focused instruction and its implementation in Polish schools.

In accordance with such goals, Chapter One was dedicated to resolving the terminological confusion surrounding the notion of form-focused instruction, illuminating different conceptions of grammar and its mastery, presenting the vicissitudes of grammar teaching in the last century and discussing the ways in which it tends to be researched. Such preliminary considerations were followed by the presentation of the non-interventionist positions on language teaching in Chapter Two and the discussion of the pedagogical, empirical and theoretical arguments for the facilitative effect of pedagogic intervention in Chapter Three. In addition, in the last section of the latter, a modified version of Ellis's (1997) comprehensive theory of instructed language learning and its relevance for the teaching of grammatical features in the foreign language context were spelled out. In Chapter Four, the focus of attention was shifted to the concrete ways in which grammar teaching can be implemented in the language classroom as well as their appraisal in terms of latest theoretical positions, research findings and the distinctive characteristics of the Polish educational context. This consisted in discussing and evaluating the specific techniques and procedures employed in introducing or practicing linguistic features, the choices involved in sequencing pedagogic intervention in a grammar-based lesson or a series of such lessons, the decisions concerning the integration of the structural and meaning-centered components of the language curriculum, the issues related to determining the focus of intervention, as well as the approaches to testing grammatical ability. Finally, Chapter Five reported and discussed the findings of two classroom-based studies which were intended to explore the impact of clusters of instructional microoptions on the acquisition of grammatical features that constituted a source of considerable learning difficulty to the language learners the author was teaching.

As explained in Chapter One, grammar teaching is one of the areas where the interests of SLA researchers and practitioners are likely to converge and, thus, empirical investigations into the effectiveness of different instructional microoptions and macrooptions represent a rare opportunity of bringing the social worlds of the two communities closer together. For this to happen, however, research cannot be conducted for its own sake, on the one hand, and impracticable pedagogic proposals cannot be one-sidedly imposed on the teaching profession, on the other. Rather, applied linguists must endeavor to mediate between disciplinary theory and research and language pedagogy (Widdowson 1990). In the view of Ellis (1997), this can be done in several ways, but the one that appears to carry the most promise is making research findings accessible to practitioners in the form of provisional specifications (Stenhouse 1975) with which they can experiment in their own classrooms. As regards the teaching of grammar, such comprehensive, feasible and context-grounded implications for classroom practice are still difficult to come by, they are rather general in nature and, in many cases, they are more applicable to second rather than foreign language settings.

One list of recommendations that should guide instructed language learning has recently been offered by Ellis (2005a), who enumerates ten broad principles which, the reader is led to assume, are applicable to all educational settings. He argues that successful instruction needs to ensure that: (1) learners develop both a rich repertoire of formulaic expressions and a rule-based competence, (2) they focus predominantly on meaning, (3) they are also afforded opportunities to focus on form, (4) pedagogic intervention is primarily directed at developing implicit knowledge while not neglecting explicit knowledge, (5) orders and sequences of acquisition are taken into account, (6) learners are supplied with extensive L2 exposure, (7) opportunities for output are available, (8) interaction in the target language is encouraged, (9) individual learner differences are considered, and (10) both controlled and free production of grammatical features is assessed.

In an even more recent publication, Ellis (2006) opts for somewhat greater specificity and addresses such controversial issues as the selection of the forms to be targeted by pedagogic intervention, the most beneficial types of FFI as well as its timing, intensity and distribution. Stressing that he is only providing an account of

his own interpretation of what the research to date has shown rather than a list of prescriptions, he maintains, among other things, that teachers should predominantly focus on structures that are known to be problematic rather than teach the whole TL grammar, emphasize their form, meaning and use, and ensure massed rather than distributed treatment thereof. He admits that the focus on forms approach is valid as long as it eventually provides learners with opportunities to communicate, but, at the same time, stresses the contribution of incidental focus on form as a way of ensuring extensive coverage of a variety of language features. As far as specific instructional options are concerned, Ellis elects to be eclectic and points out that teachers should experiment with deductive and inductive grammar teaching, input-based and output-oriented options, as well as implicit and explicit ways of providing corrective feedback. Most controversially perhaps, he makes the point that grammar instruction should not be employed in the case of beginners, and it should be deferred till learners have acquired some ability to use the language and reached the intermediate level of proficiency.

Yet another set of guidelines can be found in Mitchell (2000) and, although they are somewhat less comprehensive than the recommendations offered by Ellis (2005a, 2006), their value lies in the fact they are specifically intended to refer to a foreign language setting, as exemplified by teaching French or Spanish in the UK school system. She makes the point that effective grammar instruction should be planned and systematic, motivated by a strategic vision of desired outcomes, but, at the same time, 'rough tuned' so as to benefit learners at different stages of interlanguage development. She also accepts the use of the learners' L1 in teaching points of grammar, at least with beginners, and argues that form-focused instruction should be of the 'little and often' kind, with provisions being made for ensuring redundancy in the treatment of the instructional targets and their systematic reinforcement throughout the program. As regards specific techniques and procedures aimed at introducing and practicing linguistic features, Mitchell suggests that the development of active, articulated knowledge of grammar calls for the use of text-based, problem-solving grammar activities as well as the provision of active corrective feedback and elicitation. Finally, similarly to Ellis (2005a), she stresses the importance of embedding grammar teaching in meaning-oriented activities where

students can immediately deploy the forms they have been taught in unplanned discourse.

Although the value of all such proposals cannot be denied and they are bound to act as useful pointers that can be drawn upon in any educational context whenever strategic decisions about form-focused instruction are about to be made, they are rather fragmentary, lacking in specificity and not always applicable to the teaching of foreign languages in Polish schools. For this reason, there is a pressing need to offer a coherent and exhaustive set of theory- and research-derived pedagogic recommendations that would be context-specific and, thus, suited to the realities of the Polish instructional setting. It stands to reason that only such locally-constructed proposals are practicable and relevant enough to be elevated to the status of provisional specifications, the true feasibility and utility of which practitioners can verify in their own classrooms.

Since the task of compiling such a comprehensive list of guidelines has thus far not been undertaken in earnest, the suggestions outlined below are intended to partly remedy the problem and serve as a basis for proposing a tentative model of form-focused instruction in the Polish educational context. For the most part, these solutions draw upon the tenets of the theory of instructed language learning presented in Chapter Three as well as the in-depth discussion of the instructional microoptions and macrooptions in Chapter Four. However, they also take account of the findings of the two action research projects reported in Chapter Five and, quite predictably, they are colored to some extent by the author's own teaching experiences and his beliefs about what constitutes effective foreign language pedagogy. It should also be pointed out that although the proposals are primarily intended for foreign language teachers working in senior high schools, there is no reason why some of them should not be experimented with, verified and partly adopted in teaching younger teenagers at the junior high school level, or adults in institutions of higher education. Finally, given the heated controversies surrounding most of the issues in the field as well as the distinctive characteristics of each local teaching-learning situation, the guidelines can only be provisional and tentative, and, therefore, viewed as suggestions for improving on classroom practices rather than prescriptions to be complied with at all cost.

Bearing in mind these important qualifications, we can now proceed to spell out the principles and recommendations that should inform the provision of form-focused instruction in Polish schools and, ultimately, enhance the overall quality of language instruction in our educational context. They could be summarized as follows:

1. In the light of the limited number of language lessons in school and the meager out-of-class exposure, deliberate and systematic form-focused instruction is indispensable if students are ever expected to go beyond rudimentary communicative ability and become capable of conveying their spoken and written messages in a way that is not only comprehensible, but also accurate, precise and appropriate. As research into immersion programs has illustrated, such a goal is unlikely to be accomplished even in situations where meaning-focused instruction is extremely intensive and provided over the period of many years, which stands in stark contrast to the realities of the Polish school system. Besides, direct pedagogic intervention has been shown to produce tangible and durable outcomes, it is expected by many students, and it provides important signposts guiding them in the process of discovering the intricacies of the target language. It is also relevant that the knowledge of TL rules is still required on a number of examinations.
2. At the same time, the structural component has to be complemented with a substantial meaning-focused module which would make it possible for learners to overcome the inert knowledge problem and foster the development of the implicit, procedural target language representation. Otherwise, students will become adept at completing a range of text-manipulation activities but will never reach the stage where they can employ what they have learnt accurately, confidently and consistently in everyday speech.
3. An inevitable corollary of the two preceding points is that instruction should foster the development of explicit, declarative knowledge of rules and generalizations as well as implicit, procedural knowledge underlying fluent performance in unplanned discourse. It should also be provided in such a way that students have opportunities to gain greater control of the two types of mental representation. What is of great significance, teachers are not expected to base their decisions in this respect

on the presence of the fixed orders and sequences of acquisition identified by SLA researchers. This is because our knowledge of such developmental stages is still very restricted, hardly any teaching materials are available that reflect their existence, and the problems involved in identifying and accommodating them in a classroom setting seem to be insuperable.

4. Whatever the rationale for directing the students' attention to a linguistic feature, instruction should focus on both the structural, semantic and pragmatic dimensions so that learners may attend to and notice the relevant form-meaning-function mappings.
5. Pedagogic intervention should not be confined to developing the rule-based system underlying more deliberate and creative uses of the structure, and it should also aid learners in committing to memory and automatizing a range of chunks, fragments and formulaic expressions incorporating the feature. As many applied linguists argue (e.g. Lewis 1993; Skehan 1998), it is the memory-based dimension of implicit knowledge that accounts for the ease of much of everyday communication. Also, there is accumulating empirical evidence that, under favorable circumstances, such formulaic expressions can be analyzed into their component parts and serve as a basis for the development of rule-based competence.
6. Contrary to what Ellis (2002a, 2006) proposes, it appears necessary to emphasize both the structural and communicative components from the very beginning of instruction. This is because the scant opportunities for exposure may virtually preclude learners from ever developing the ability to use the target language unless they are provided with advance organizers which will prime their noticing of specific linguistic features and enable them to disentangle the intricacies of the system underlying the utterances in the input. It stands to reason, then, that grammar teaching should be more prominent in the initial stages of a language program but, with time, as learners become more proficient, the meaning-focused component should gradually come to the fore. In fact, it is possible to envisage a situation where the main points of grammar have been covered and at least partly internalized by upper-intermediate or advanced learners, and their attention is only directed to the features that turn out to be problematic as they are engaged in conveying genuine meanings and messages.

7. It logically follows from the above that it is a structural syllabus rather than a task-based one that should provide the main basis for the selection of language features to be taught, at least until learners have become proficient enough to fully benefit from teaching that is predominantly based on the experiential strategy and incidental focus on form. Such a systematic coverage of TL grammar is not only warranted on pedagogic and contextual grounds but also necessitated by the fact that this approach is manifest in most available teaching materials. This does not mean, of course, that elements of task-based instruction cannot be introduced into the program at any time either to provide learners with opportunities to deploy the linguistic features taught in spontaneous communication or to address the areas that turn out to be the most problematic. It is clear, then, that, contrary to some proposals (e.g. Ellis 1997, 2002a), the task-based component should be integrated with the structural one, which does not exclude the possibility that some lessons can be designed with an eye to fostering meaning and message conveyance in its own right.
8. Even though the structures taught are preselected and graded in accordance with some predetermined criteria, it is necessary to opt for a cyclical rather than linear version of the structural syllabus so that the targeted forms are revisited and reinforced at regular intervals. As a consequence, learners who have not yet reached the requisite stage of interlanguage development at the time a feature is first introduced will still have a chance to attend to it once again when the time is ripe, carry out the necessary cognitive comparisons and, eventually, integrate it into their implicit knowledge. While such provisions are typically made in most modern coursebooks, it is also crucial that the teacher engages in the kind of remedial intervention that was employed in the treatment sessions of the two action research projects described in Chapter Five.
9. When it comes to planning and implementing grammar-based lessons, there is a place for both planned and intensive focus on forms designs, such as the still ubiquitous PPP procedure or one of its alternatives, and planned or incidental focus on form options, such as those used in the weak and strong variants of task-based instruction. Since the choices in this area are inextricably linked to the status of the structural and meaning-

centered components in the overall curriculum, it is the former that would be the most frequent with beginner or intermediate learners, with the latter being increasingly drawn upon when teaching fairly advanced students.

10. In situations where teachers opt for the PPP procedure, they should ensure that all the three phases are sufficiently emphasized and none of them is neglected or omitted in its entirety. This means that not only should learners be familiarized with the relevant generalization and provided with extensive practice in the form of controlled text-manipulation activities, but that they should also be afforded copious opportunities to use the features taught in relatively spontaneous communication, which can be fostered through the application of text-creation activities or, better yet, focused communication tasks. In carefully following a sequence of this kind, we can cater to the development, proceduralization and automatization of explicit knowledge, but, at the same time, ensure that developmentally ready learners also have a chance to integrate the feature into the implicit knowledge store, or gain greater control of the forms they have already partly acquired.
11. It is necessary to realize that the teaching of most grammatical features is not a one-shot affair, and that the growth and automatization of explicit and, even more so, implicit knowledge requires that students have multiple opportunities to process a structure in comprehension and production. Therefore, the PPP paradigm should be viewed in terms of lesson sequences rather than isolated grammar-based classes. This applies in particular to its free-production component which should be lengthy and intensive enough for the students to attend to the feature in the input and notice the gaps and holes in their interlanguage knowledge. In fact, it is possible to view the last P as a sequence of planned focus on form lessons in its own right, where such implicit instructional microoptions as input enrichment, output enhancement or productive and receptive focused communication tasks could be used.
12. The teaching of grammatical structures can take the form of either deductive (direct) or inductive (indirect) explicit form-focused instruction, as dictated by some inherent properties of a particular form, the amount of time available and the envisaged goals the teacher wishes to achieve. Although, due to the de-



mands they place on invaluable classroom time and the amount of preparation they require from the teacher, corpus-based, consciousness-raising or text-reconstruction activities cannot be employed on a regular basis, they should be used from time to time to introduce an element of novelty and encourage learners to process the form more deeply or figure out by themselves the subtleties of its usage. The teacher's use of Polish alongside the foreign language in providing explanations or metalinguistic comments on more complex features is justified, and the learners' occasional reliance on L1 in completing grammar tasks should not be viewed as a cause for concern.

13. A range of output-based and input-oriented instructional microoptions can be utilized to help learners gain greater control of the targeted structure, with the important caveat that the techniques and procedures employed should be compatible with the pedagogic goals set. Accordingly, various text-manipulation activities such as paraphrasing, gap-filling or translation are likely to contribute to greater control over explicit knowledge, whereas relatively free text-creation activities, focused communication tasks, different types of input enrichment, or the provision of corrective feedback during meaning and message conveyance are more appropriate when the automatization of implicit mental representation is the primary aim. There are also procedures, such as consciousness-raising activities, text-reconstruction tasks or processing instruction, which can serve the dual purpose of fostering the growth and better command of both knowledge types depending on the aspect being emphasized.
14. The provision of corrective feedback should be viewed as a useful technique in teaching grammar, an important qualification being that the choice of the feedback options used and the decision to provide them should be consistent with the instructional goals set. Thus, while correcting learners' errors as they perform highly controlled exercises contributes to the development of explicit knowledge, reacting to inaccuracies in learners' communicative output may ultimately trigger the growth and automatization of implicit knowledge. The latter goal can best be achieved when corrective feedback is relatively immediate but unobtrusive (i.e. it takes the form of a recast or a clarification request), it is focused and intensive (i.e. it is limited to one or

two features and consistently provided in at least a few lessons), and the learners are cognizant of its target.

15. The selection of instructional techniques and procedures should take account of the status of the targeted feature in the students' interlanguages as well as the presence of individual learner differences. As demonstrated in the two studies reported in Chapter Five, the former is not necessarily problematic on condition that the teacher is familiar with a particular group of students and reflective enough to ruminate on their use of the structure in controlled and free production tasks. As for the latter, it is much more challenging because of the striking paucity of empirical investigations in this area, the difficulty involved in obtaining the relevant information about learners and the presence of very different students in any single classroom. The only reasonable solution, then, appears to be variety since the provision of diverse learning experiences ensures that different learning styles and preferences will at least in part be catered for.
16. The choice of methodological microoptions and macrooptions must also be informed by the inherent characteristics of the Polish educational context. For this reason, the duration of instructional treatments necessary for input flooding or input enhancement to have a noticeable impact on acquisition makes their application rather unfeasible when the goal is the introduction of a feature, and difficult when intensive practice thereof is required. Likewise, the use of consciousness-raising tasks and text-reconstruction activities is constrained by the fact that students are likely to fall back upon their mother tongue in their completion.
17. An important status in instructional sequences should be accorded to review classes which are intended to help students reinforce the command of the language features taught over some period of time, frequently with the aim of preparing them for a test. While, in some cases, students can benefit from the diverse text-manipulation activities typically used for this purpose, more often than not, the utility of such classes would be exponentially enhanced if they also enabled learners to engage in implicit learning. This could be done through the inclusion of different types of focused communication tasks and providing students with the right kind of corrective feedback on their communicative performance. In situations where the aim is to

ensure greater control over explicit knowledge, consciousness-raising tasks or text-reconstruction activities could occasionally be used alongside more traditional output practice activities.

18. Whenever feasible, teachers should make efforts to measure both explicit and implicit knowledge of grammatical structures, which means that traditional discrete-point tests based on selected- and limited-response items should be complemented with extended-response or free-production tasks. Although, due to planning and technical problems, formal assessment of this kind can perhaps only be conducted just several times in a school year, it is also possible to conduct it less formally by paying attention to learners' uses of specific features in communication tasks or other carefully selected oral assignments they are required to perform.
19. Teachers need to be realistic in their expectations of the effect that formal instruction may exert on their students' mastery of grammatical structures. They should also be in a position to determine whether learner output is the outcome of implicit or explicit knowledge of a structure, as well as whether it manifests the use of rote-learned chunks or the workings of a rule-based system. All of this is so important because only in this way is it possible to make strategic decisions about the need for further pedagogic intervention and the choice of the most beneficial instructional options.
20. Finally, teachers should try to foster learner autonomy in learning and using grammar since this holds out the promise that students will not forget what they have been taught, they will find their own ways of developing and automatizing their implicit and explicit knowledge of the structures introduced, and draw upon the most beneficial learning strategies for this purpose.

Detailed and comprehensive as such recommendations might be, they are not foolproof, in the sense that they reflect the author's interpretation of the theoretical positions and research findings and, thus, they need to be constantly updated and improved upon. While this task could be accomplished on the basis of the synthesis and analysis of the findings of the burgeoning FFI research conducted in a variety of educational settings, there is clearly a need to complement this source with context-grounded empirical investigations. Given the paucity of such studies, applied linguists should in the

first place become convinced of the importance of this line of enquiry, and recognize its potential in enhancing the quality of foreign language instruction in Polish schools and bridging the gap between SLA research and pedagogy. Once empirical investigations of this kind get under way, they should best be carried out in actual classrooms or in cooperation with practitioners, aiming to examine the relative value of both single instructional microoptions and diverse combinations thereof at different educational levels. At a later time, the focus of such studies should be extended to explore the interfaces between the effectiveness of different techniques, the properties of various linguistic features, individual learner differences and expectations, as well as teachers' beliefs and cognitions.

Even though such investigations would pose serious design problems, it would also be interesting to examine the potential contributions of various macrooptions in form-focused instruction by comparing, for example, the effectiveness of PPP and task-based lessons and lesson sequences. Reminiscent as they might be of comparative method studies, such research projects would undoubtedly provide useful insights on condition that care were taken to focus on both the process and the product components, control for extraneous variables, and include the perspectives of both teachers and learners. As far as methodological issues are concerned, it appears necessary to devise tasks that would more consistently tap the subjects' implicit knowledge, employ measurements that would take account of the learners' passage through developmental stages and conduct longitudinal studies that would provide insights into the evolving status of a particular form in the interlanguage.

Regardless of how coherent, feasible and rational the provisional specifications produced by researchers may be, their implementation ultimately depends on the extent to which they are disseminated among practitioners, who, in turn, have to perceive them as relevant and useful. Beyond doubt, huge contributions to propagating such new ideas and shaping positive attitudes towards them can be made by methodology courses in college and university foreign languages departments, national and local teacher training centers, as well as the workshops and conferences for prospective and in-service teachers organized by leading publishers. Although one can surely expect some intransigency and fear of innovative ideas in these circles, it stands to reason that such obstacles will sooner or later be overcome in the face of convincing theoretical

and empirical evidence as long as the pedagogic proposals are cogent, practicable and reflective of the realities of the Polish educational context.

What may be much more difficult to change is language policy at the national level which inevitably influences local practices and determines what happens in many language classrooms. Here, we can see a push towards communication, prompted, among other things, by the perspectives on language competence and language learning advanced by the Council of Europe and laid out in the *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages*. This tendency mostly manifests itself in the fact that concerns for accuracy, appropriateness and precision have largely been pushed to the sidelines in favor of communicative effectiveness on the final exams administered at the end of senior high school. In effect, they can easily be passed as long as learners have developed only quite rudimentary language skills.

Although, as mentioned above, placing a premium on meaning and message conveyance is truly commendable in the light of the present-day preoccupation with language forms, it should under no circumstances involve according an inferior status to form-focused instruction. Surely, such a development does not yet seem imminent, but, gradually, learners will become aware of the fact that preparations for their final exams can be equally effective without the study of grammar and, in fact, their precious time could more profitably be spent doing hundreds of multiple-choice and matching exercises. Also, their teachers might sooner or later come to the inescapable conclusion that they should not bother too much with accuracy, since teaching to the test or ensuring that students somehow manage to communicate their ideas brings much better results as far as examination performance is concerned. Justified as it would be by practical considerations, such neglect of language forms could bring about truly adverse consequences since basic communicative abilities may be sufficient to get by in a foreign country but are patently inadequate to ensure success in academic, vocational or professional terms. Beyond doubt, if students are expected to move beyond such rudimentary survival skills and develop full-fledged communicative competence in the target language, there should be a place for both the meaning-focused and form-focused component in the school curriculum.

Having said this, it is perhaps fitting that the investigation of the role of formal instruction in foreign language pedagogy undertaken in the present work should be concluded with a quote from Ellis (2006: 101-102), who writes: "Grammar has held and continues to hold a central place in language teaching. The zero option was flirted with but never really took hold as is evident in both the current textbook materials emanating from publishing houses (...) and in current theories of L2 acquisition. There is ample evidence to demonstrate that teaching grammar works". Obviously, it is up to language teachers to experiment with the provisional specifications offered above and to decide which combinations thereof should be employed to make form-focused instruction most effective in their own local contexts.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1

Sample materials used in the course of the instructional treatment focusing on the past simple tense:

### *Couple who survived an amazing 66 days at sea*

A couple from Miami, Bill and Simone Butler, SPENT sixty-six days in a life-raft in the seas of Central America after their yacht SANK. They *survived* in very good condition.

Twenty-one days after they LEFT Panama in their yacht, Siboney, they MET some whales. 'They *started* to hit the side of the boat,' said Bill, 'and then suddenly we HEARD water'. Two minutes later, the yacht was sinking. The *jumped* into the life-raft and *watched* the boat go under the water.

For twenty days they HAD tins of food, biscuits, and bottles of water. They also HAD a fishing line and a machine to make salt water into drinking water – two things which *saved* their lives. They CAUGHT eight to ten fish a day and ATE them raw. Then the line BROKE. 'So we HAD no more fish until something very strange *happened*. Some sharks CAME to feed, and the fish under the raft were afraid and CAME to the surface. I CAUGHT them with my hands'.

About twenty ships *passed* them, but no one SAW them. After fifty days at sea their life-raft was beginning to break up. Then suddenly it was all over. A fishing boat *spotted* them and *picked* them up. They couldn't stand up, so the captain *carried* them onto his boat and TOOK them to Costa Rica. Their two months at sea was over.

*Adapted from Headway Pre-Intermediate by John & Liz Soars*

Decide whether the following statements are *true* or *false*. Justify your answers:

1. Bill and Simone *decided* to go on a voyage to Panama.
2. Some sharks HIT the yacht so hard that it *started* to sink.
3. They HAD a life-raft on board the yacht.
4. They always *cooked* the fish they CAUGHT with the fishing line.
5. The sharks ATE all the fish around and they HAD nothing to eat.
6. The captains of the ships that *passed* them SAW the raft but they never *stopped*.
7. They *jumped* into the fishing boat when it came closer.
8. They SPENT more than two months at sea.

Work in pairs and come up with a story about an earthquake you survived. Use the ideas provided below to help you.

A beautiful morning in Los Angeles      take the subway to work  
the earth begin to shake    the train stop    panic    a fire break out  
people run away    dark tunnel      police arrive      ambulances outside  
passengers wounded      take to hospital    only some cuts and bruises  
get home in the evening    call your parents in Poland

## Appendix 2

Sample materials used in the course of the instructional treatment focusing on the passive voice:

### *Spring*

The Helston 'Furry (Floral) Dance' is one of the oldest festivals in England. It is held in Helston, an old Cornish town. It celebrates the coming of spring. The 'dance' is a procession through the narrow streets of the town. The men wear top hats and suits, the women wear their best dresses and children are dressed in white. At the time of the festival the streets must be decorated with beautiful flowers. An old route through the town is followed and people even pass through their neighbor's houses, shops and gardens. At present preparations are being made for this year's event. A lot of flowers have already been bought and the clothes have already been prepared.

### *Winter*

The celebration of Halloween on October 31<sup>st</sup> was begun by the Celts over 2000 years ago and it has been known ever since. Their festival of the dead marked the beginning of winter. People believed that ghosts and witches came out on that night. These beliefs were not encouraged by the church but the festival was not abandoned. Lanterns and candles were lit by the Irish to keep the ghosts away and costumes and masks were worn to frighten them. People traveled from village to village and asked for food. It was believed that any village that didn't give food would have bad luck. These customs were brought to the USA in the nineteenth century by Irish immigrants. Today in the USA and UK, children wear costumes and go from door to door saying 'Trick or treat' and they are given sweets to take home. Many people say that the festival is so picturesque that it should be preserved at any cost.

*Adapted from Opportunities Pre-Intermediate by Michael Harris, David Mower and Anna Sikorzyńska*

Correct the following statements about the festivals and then compare your answers with a partner:

1. The Helston 'Furry Dance' is held to celebrate the end of spring.
2. All the inhabitants are dressed in white during the Helston festival.
3. The clothes for the Helston festival have not been prepared yet.
4. The celebration of Halloween was begun by the Anglo-Saxons.
5. The festival was abandoned for some time because it was not encouraged by the church.
6. Children are taken inside the houses they visit at all times.

Using the cues below describe how Thanksgiving day is celebrated in the USA. Be prepared to tell the rest of the class about the holiday:

1. Thanksgiving/celebrate/fourth Thursday in November.
2. first American colonists/give food/by native American Indians/in 1620.
3. they/show how to grow own food/by native American Indians.
4. in 1621/first Thanksgiving festival/celebrate/by the colonists.
5. it/make a holiday/by President Lincoln/in 1864/and/it celebrate/by American people since then.
6. now/turkey and pumpkin pie/eat/in family dinners
7. cranberry sauce/should also use/ for that occasion
8. on that day/family members reunite/even if they separate/by thousands of kilometers

## Appendix 3

Role cards for the oral task intended to elicit spontaneous use of the past simple tense:

### Task A

Opowiedz swojemu koledze/koleżance o swoim pierwszym dniu w szkole średniej. Co dokładnie robiłeś/łaś tego dnia? Jak byłeś/łaś ubrany/a? Czy znałeś/łaś inne osoby ze swojej nowej klasy? Jakie wrażenie zrobili na Tobie koledzy/koleżanki? Jakich nauczycieli spotkałeś/łaś? Jakie były Twoje wrażenia po tym spotkaniu? Jak się czułeś/łaś tego dnia? Jak wyglądała szkoła i jakie zrobiła na Tobie wrażenie. Co robiłeś/łaś później tego samego dnia? Każdy/a z Was ma 5 minut na wykonanie tego zadania.

### Task B

Opowiedz swojemu koledze/koleżance co robiłeś/łaś podczas ostatnich Świąt Bożego Narodzenia. W jaki sposób Twoja rodzina się do nich przygotowywała? Czy zostałeś/łaś w domu, czy też gdzieś wyjechałeś/łaś? Co dokładnie robiłeś/łaś w Wigilię i dwa dni świąt. Jakie dostałeś/łaś prezenty, a jakie kupiłeś? Jakie filmy widziałeś/łaś? Czy odwiedziła Cię jakaś rodzina? Jakie wrażenie

wywarły na Tobie Święta? Czy były inne niż w zeszłym roku? Każdy/a z Was ma 5 minut na wykonanie tego zadania.

### Task C

Opowiedz swojemu koledze/koleżance o tym jak spędziłeś/łaś Wielkanoc. Czy byłeś/łaś w domu przez cały czas, czy też gdzieś wyjechałeś/łaś? Co zazwyczaj robiłeś/łaś, gdy byłeś/łaś w domu? W jaki sposób Twoja rodzina przygotowywała się do Świąt? Jak wyglądały same Święta? Jakie programy i filmy oglądałeś/ łaś? Czy odwiedziła Cię jakaś rodzina? Jakie wrażenie wywarły na Tobie Święta? Czy były inne niż w zeszłym roku? Czy miałeś ochotę wracać do szkoły? Każdy z Was ma 5 minut na wykonanie tego zadania.

## Appendix 4

Sets of pictures used in the written task intended to elicit planned use of the past simple tense:

### Task A





## Task B



## Task C



## Appendix 5

Role cards for focused communication tasks intended to elicit spontaneous use of the passive voice:

### Task A

#### *Role card 1*

Rozpoczynasz rozmowę. Opowiedz koledze/koleżance o domu w Nowym Jorku. W swojej wypowiedzi postaraj się uwzględnić podane poniżej informacje. Możesz także dodać inne istotne fakty i wiadomości:

Location: in the suburbs near a beautiful lake and park, surrounded by a garden, protected by a high fence.

History: built at the beginning of the 19th century, designed by a famous American architect, damaged by a flood in 1930, rebuilt a year later, regarded as one of the most beautiful houses in the area for a long time.

Services: garbage picked up three times a week, the area patrolled by the police very often, at present a lot of trees planted along the street, a new shopping center built a few kilometers away lately, in the future – a swimming pool complex constructed in the neighborhood and a McDonald's restaurant opened, seen by twenty potential buyers since last month.

Other information: five rooms and two bathrooms, redecorated 5 years ago – rooms painted, garage added, cable television installed, windows changed, roof repaired, not used since that time, the owner run over by a car after the redecoration, recently bought by some millionaire but nobody seen there since that time.

Następnie wysłuchaj kolegi/koleżanki, który/a opowie Ci o domu o którym się dowiedział/a. Zdecydujecie wspólnie, który z tych dwóch domów byłby bardziej odpowiedni dla Waszych rodzin.

#### *Role card 2*

Wysłuchaj kolegi/koleżanki, który/a opowie Ci o domu o którym się dowiedział/a. Opowiedz koledze/koleżance o domu w Nowym Jorku. W swojej wypowiedzi postaraj się uwzględnić podane poniżej informacje. Możesz także dodać inne istotne fakty i wiadomości:

Location: in the center of Washington near the White House, many museums situated nearby, surrounded by residences of ambassadors

History: about 25 years ago, designed by a famous French architect, a few people killed during construction, used as a Greek consulate for a few years, partly destroyed by a fire five years ago but rebuilt after a few months.

Services: the area often visited by important people, house guarded by the police 24 for a day, garbage collected every day, a school bus stops nearby – children picked up at 8 and brought back at 4, at present satellite TV installed in all the

houses in the area, the street repaired, in the future – a new cinema constructed, public transport improved and parking lot built.

Other information: 10 rooms, three kitchens and five bathrooms, damaged by a fire six years ago, later completely redecorated – a swimming pool added, the roof changed, another garage built, alarm installed, lately used as the residence of a senator, the old trees and hedges around the house admired for many years.

Zdecydujecie wspólnie, który z tych dwóch domów byłby bardziej odpowiedni dla Waszych rodzin.

## Task B

### *Role card 1*

Rozpoczynasz rozmowę. Opowiedz koledze/kolezance o hotelu, w którym spędziłeś/łaś ostatni weekend. W swojej wypowiedzi postaraj się uwzględnić podane poniżej informacje. Możesz także dodać inne istotne fakty i wiadomości:

Location: the center of New York, located next to Central Park, seen from very far away because it is a very tall building.

History: built in the 1920s, used as a government office during the war, redecorated after the war, a lot of changes made since then, all the rooms painted recently, new elevators installed, a new restaurant opened, considered to be one of the best hotels in the city for many years.

Services: your car kept in a garage, watched by guards twenty four hours a day, your clothes washed, breakfast brought to your room, all the meals included in the price, guests given a chance to use a tennis court and a swimming pool, the best guides and places to visit recommended by the hotel staff.

Other information: famous artists often invited to give concerts, the hotel visited by important people, at present rooms prepared for Tony Blair and equipment installed by his bodyguards, a sauna opened in the hotel lately, the gym not redecorated yet, next year twenty more rooms added and a casino built, last week an important conference held in the hotel.

Następnie wysłuchaj kolegi/kolezanki, który/a opowie Ci o hotelu w którym spędził/a ostatni weekend. Zdecydujecie wspólnie, który z tych dwóch hoteli byłby bardziej dla Was odpowiedni gdybyście chcieli jechać na wakacje.

### *Role card 2*

Wysłuchaj kolegi/kolezanki, który/a opowie Ci o hotelu, w którym spędził/a ostatni weekend. Opowiedz koledze/kolezance o hotelu, gdzie Ty spędziłeś ostatni weekend. W swojej wypowiedzi postaraj się uwzględnić podane poniżej informacje. Możesz także dodać inne istotne fakty i wiadomości:

Location: the suburbs of Los Angeles, situated very close to the sea, beautiful beaches admired by tourists from the hotel windows.

History: constructed at the end of the 19th century, later used as a police station, part of the hotel destroyed by a fire in 1940 and later rebuilt, since then used as a hotel, lately some changes made, so far new furniture bought and the rooms provided with individual bathrooms, a new swimming pool added last year, for many years visited by rich tourists who want some peace and quiet.

Services: no garage built yet and your car kept behind the building, the parking lot guarded by dogs, your clothes washed and ironed, breakfast eaten in the hotel restaurant, meals not included in the price, guests allowed to use sports facilities, trips booked by hotel staff.

Other information: hotel not visited by famous people too often but last month a new wing opened by president Bush, at present some trees planted and a place for a new fence prepared, a lovely café opened nearby lately but a Chinese restaurant not completed yet, next year a shopping center built a few kilometers away and a playground for children constructed.

Zdecydujecie wspólnie, który z tych dwóch hoteli byłby dla Was bardziej odpowiedni gdybyście chcieli jechać na wakacje.

### Task C

#### *Role card 1*

Rozpoczynasz rozmowę. Opowiedz koledze/kolezance o uniwersytecie, który odwiedziłeś/łaś dwa tygodnie temu. W swojej wypowiedzi postaraj się uwzględnić podane poniżej informacje. Możesz także dodać inne istotne fakty i wiadomości:

Location: the center of Chicago, situated next to the central railway station, surrounded by skyscrapers, the main street seen from the windows.

History: founded at the beginning of the 20th century by some millionaire, at first only men taught there, first women admitted in the 1950s and a lot of new courses added at that time, a lot of changes introduced since then, lately the building redecorated and a new parking lot built, many good teachers employed last year, considered the best school in the state for years.

Services: students allowed to use the library and computer rooms, dinners served in the cafeteria, drinks and snacks sold in the main building, the parking lot guarded twenty four hours a day, students employed in companies around Chicago, trips organized during holidays, students given discounts on local buses.

Other information: known scientists often invited to give lectures, school supported by the city, scholarships offered to the best students, at present a new gym built and the windows changed, a cinema opened in the building lately but the new computer room not completed yet, in a few months another building added to the university and a few new courses started.

Następnie wysłuchaj kolegi/koleżanki, który/a opowie Ci o uniwersytecie który odwiedził/a dwa tygodnie temu. Zdecydujecie wspólnie, który z tych dwóch uniwersytetów byłby dla Was bardziej odpowiedni gdy skończycie naukę w szkole średniej.

### *Role card 2*

Wysłuchaj kolegi/koleżanki, który/a opowie Ci o uniwersytecie, który odwiedził/a dwa tygodnie temu. Opowiedz koledze/koleżance o uniwersytecie, który Ty odwiedziłeś/łaś. W swojej wypowiedzi postaraj się uwzględnić podane poniżej informacje. Możesz także dodać inne istotne fakty i wiadomości:

Location: about twenty kilometers from Washington, located very close to the national airport, a lot of noise heard, some beautiful lakes seen from the computer room.

History: founded by the government in the 19th century, men and women taught from the beginning, attended by American presidents, the name changed in the 1890s, destroyed by a flood in 1930 and rebuilt a year later, some new departments opened after the war, a lot of new courses started since then and many changes made, lately many books published by teachers, thought to be a school for the rich.

Services: students taken to the city center by bus, discounts on buses not given, parking lot located far from the school and not guarded, dinners eaten in a nearby restaurant, students allowed to use the library, computer rooms, the swimming pool and the gym, students asked to work for the school in their free time, trips abroad organized in summer.

Other information: famous politicians often invited, lately the school visited by Bill Clinton, money given to school by rich people, scholarships offered to few students, formal clothes worn to classes, at present a new library built and preparations made for President's visit, lately a law department added but the new biology lab not opened yet, in a year a new dorm constructed and new equipment bought.

Zdecydujecie wspólnie, który z tych dwóch uniwersytetów byłby dla Was bardziej odpowiedni gdy skończycie naukę w szkole średniej.

## Appendix 6

Tests intended to elicit planned use of passive constructions:

### Test A

Przekształć podane zdania na stronę bierną. Podmioty zdań w stronie biernej zostały podane:

1. They often buy the bread in markets. The bread .....
2. Ted has remembered about our date. Our date .....
3. My sister is feeding her dog now. My sister's dog .....
4. Leonardo da Vinci had painted the Mona Lisa. The Mona Lisa .....
5. You can blow out the candles now. The candles .....
6. They flew the driver to the nearest hospital. The driver .....
7. Tony was making supper when it happened. Supper .....
8. They don't have to grow any vegetables this year. Vegetables.....

Wstaw odpowiednią formę czasowników w nawiasach:

Washington DC (locate) \_\_\_\_\_ in the District of Columbia along the Potomac River. It (design) \_\_\_\_\_ by the French architect Pierre L'Enfant in the late 18th century. Washington was the first city in the world that (plan) \_\_\_\_\_ as the nation capital. Many buildings (admire) \_\_\_\_\_ in Washington, but the most important of them is the White House which simply must (see) \_\_\_\_\_ by anyone visiting the American capital. Every year this and many other buildings in Washington DC (visit) \_\_\_\_\_ by millions of tourists. Lately many monuments in the city (redecorate) \_\_\_\_\_ and they look more beautiful than ever. At the moment a lot of new things (bring) \_\_\_\_\_ into the White House because the new president has just moved in. In the next few months lot of money (also, spend) \_\_\_\_\_ on replacing the equipment destroyed by the previous administration. Usually, the exact cost of all the repairs (keep) \_\_\_\_\_ secret, however.

Podane poniżej zdania łączą się w opowiadanie. Uzupełnij luki odpowiednimi czasownikami w stronie biernej.

1. The puppy was \_\_\_\_\_ on the street a few days ago.
2. Later it \_\_\_\_\_ to our house.
3. My little son saw it for the first time when it \_\_\_\_\_ by my wife because it was very dirty.
4. Since that time the little dog \_\_\_\_\_ always \_\_\_\_\_ in the house because my son wants to play with it all the time.
5. Last week it even had to \_\_\_\_\_ to the zoo because Mark refused to leave home without it.
6. Since the time I found it on the street, the puppy \_\_\_\_\_ a lot of new tricks by my children.
7. At present it \_\_\_\_\_ how to open the door with its paw (*łapa*).
8. My wife \_\_\_\_\_ by dogs a few times in her life so she is afraid of our new pet.

## Test B

Przekształć podane zdania na stronę bierną. Podmioty zdań w stronie biernej zostały podane:

1. She seldom eats spaghetti for dinner. Spaghetti .....
2. They have taken care of your brother. Your brother .....
3. Frank is growing a beard this week. A beard .....
4. They had repaired the car when I came back. The car .....
5. You must ring up your mother immediately. Your mother .....
6. He threw the key on the table and went out. The key .....
7. He was doing the washing-up when the lights went out.  
The washing-up .....
8. She didn't have to keep that cat in the house. That cat .....

Wstaw odpowiednią formę czasowników w nawiasach:

The place where I stayed last summer (situate) \_\_\_\_\_ in a beautiful valley near the city of Seattle. The town (found) \_\_\_\_\_ at the very beginning of the nineteenth century by a group of immigrants from Ireland. It was one of the first places in the USA where a few different churches (build) \_\_\_\_\_. Three of them (believe) \_\_\_\_\_ to be the most beautiful buildings in that part of the United States and, luckily, all of them can still (see) \_\_\_\_\_ by tourists who come here every year. At least once a year a meeting in one of these churches (attend) \_\_\_\_\_ by thousands of people from all over the country. Lately a lot of new hotels (construct) \_\_\_\_\_ in the town and it is a much more attractive place now. At present some concerts of religious music (hold) \_\_\_\_\_ and they are much more popular than anybody has expected. In the next two weeks a lot of changes (make) \_\_\_\_\_ to the best hotel in town because the president himself is coming to visit. Usually, such preparations (pay) \_\_\_\_\_ for by the government, but this time the owners of the hotel have decided to cover the costs themselves.

Podane poniżej zdania łączą się w opowiadanie. Uzupełnij luki odpowiednimi czasownikami w stronie biernej:

1. The new car \_\_\_\_\_ a month ago.
2. When it \_\_\_\_\_ for the first time, all my family was very happy.
3. My father saw the first scratch when a wheel \_\_\_\_\_ after I had a flat tire (*złapałem gumę*).
4. Since that time the car \_\_\_\_\_ never \_\_\_\_\_ in front of the block of flats during the night.
5. Last week it even had to \_\_\_\_\_ to the garage at one o'clock at night because my father didn't want some kids to damage it.
6. Since the time we bought the car, two of my brothers \_\_\_\_\_ how to drive by my father.
7. At the moment the car \_\_\_\_\_ by a mechanic because something happened to the engine.
8. My father is very worried because somebody stole our neighbor's car last week and the thief \_\_\_\_\_ yet. He is afraid the same could happen to our car.

## Test C

Przekształć podane zdania na stronę bierną. Podmioty zdań w stronie biernej zostały podane:

1. He often drinks white coffee after dinner. White coffee .....
2. My sister has forgotten about the letter. The letter .....
3. Mark is speaking Russian at the moment. Russian .....
4. She had cleaned the house when I got back. The house .....
5. You should teach him to drive as soon as possible. He .....
6. My dog bit Frank's mother last week. Frank's mother .....
7. John was writing a letter when it began to rain. A letter .....
8. She couldn't hold the hot potato in her hand. The hot potato .....

Wstaw odpowiednią formę czasowników w nawiasach:

The little town of Rockwell (consider) \_\_\_\_\_ by many people to be the most interesting place in the state of Arizona. Rockwell (build) \_\_\_\_\_ in the middle of the nineteenth century by a group of German colonists. Soon afterwards most of those colonists (kill) \_\_\_\_\_ by local Indians. Their graves (often, visit) \_\_\_\_\_ by their relatives and tourists who say that money must (collect) \_\_\_\_\_ to redecorate that place. At least once a month flowers (bring) \_\_\_\_\_ to the graves by the inhabitants of the town. Lately a few documentary films (make) \_\_\_\_\_ about Rockwell and the inhabitants hope it will attract even more tourists. At the moment a state holiday (celebrate) \_\_\_\_\_ and the streets are full of tourists and people who live nearby. In the next few months two new hotels (open) \_\_\_\_\_ in the center of Rockwell because more and more people are coming to visit this historic location. Usually constructors (give) \_\_\_\_\_ at least a year to build a hotel like that but here they have to do it in six months.

Podane poniżej zdania łączą się w opowiadanie. Uzupełnij luki odpowiednimi czasownikami w stronie biernej.

1. The little cat \_\_\_\_\_ to us by our neighbor two weeks ago.
2. When it \_\_\_\_\_ out of the box for the first time, my little sister was very happy.
3. She touched it for the first time when it \_\_\_\_\_ by my mother because it was hungry.
4. Since that time the cat \_\_\_\_\_ always \_\_\_\_\_ in a box in my sister's room because she can't sleep without it.
5. When it had to \_\_\_\_\_ alone at home last Sunday, my little sister started crying and didn't want to go to school.
6. Since the time we got the cat, at least ten mice \_\_\_\_\_ around the house and I don't think there are any left.
7. At the moment a new place \_\_\_\_\_ for our cat in my sister's room.
8. My father is not very happy about the cat because so far two dead hens \_\_\_\_\_ outside the house and he thinks our cat has killed them.



## Appendix 7

An example of a consciousness-raising task used in the instructional treatment focusing on the present perfect tenses:

Zdecyduj wraz kolegą/koleżanką, które z dwóch zdań jest poprawne. Spróbujcie uzasadnij swoją decyzję. Podczas wykonywania tego zadania należy przez cały czas używać języka angielskiego.

- 1a. How long have they been living in that house?
- 1b. How long has they been living in that house?
  
- 2a. George has taught me how to swim last year.
- 2b. George taught me how to swim last year.
  
- 3a. I have had this car for three years.
- 3b. I have this car for three years.
  
- 4a. Ted has just given me some money.
- 4b. Ted have just given me some money.
  
- 5a. Mary has visited many countries since she won the prize.
- 5b. Mary visited many countries since she has won the prize.
  
- 6a. When have you buy this necklace?
- 6b. When did you buy this necklace?
  
- 7a. Have you ever heard that song before?
- 7b. Did you ever hear this song before?
  
- 8a. Last year she flew to London and has stayed there for two days.
- 8b. Last year she flew to London and stayed there for two days.

## Appendix 8

An example of a dictogloss task used in the instructional treatment focusing on the present perfect tenses:

Monica Smith has been very happy lately. About two weeks ago she went to her friend's birthday party and met a very handsome boy who asked her out on a date. Since that time she has met him many times and she has already decided that this is the man she has been looking for all her life. Last weekend they went to a lake together and they had a very good time. They have already decided to do it again in the future. Monica's parents are not so happy because she has been getting worse grades in school for some time. Mrs. Smith has spoken to her several times lately but it has not helped so far. She says that her daughter is the most stubborn person she has ever met, but she hopes that Monica has not forgotten about her plans for the future yet.

Appendix 9

An example of a text and a follow-up activity used in the instructional treatment focusing on the present perfect tenses. The targeted forms are graphically highlighted:

Read the text and then match questions from column A with those in column B to form a dialog:

Jasper White is one of those rare people who believe in ancient myths. He HAS JUST BOUGHT a new house in the city, but he HAS HAD trouble with motorists ever SINCE he *moved* in. He HAS BEEN LIVING there FOR TWO WEEKS and when he returns home at night, he always finds that someone HAS PARKED a car outside his gate. Because of this, he HAS NOT BEEN ABLE to get his own car into the garage even once FOR ALL THIS TIME. Jasper HAS PUT UP 'No Parking' signs outside his gate LATELY, but SO FAR these HAVE NOT HAD any effect. NOW he HAS PUT an ugly stone head over the gate. It is one of the ugliest faces I HAVE EVER SEEN. I *asked* him *yesterday* what is *was* and he *told* me that it *was* Medusa, the Gorgon. Jasper hopes that she will turn motorists to stone. Unfortunately they HAVE NOT STOPPED parking in front of his gate SO FAR and none of them HAS TURNED to stone YET.

*Adapted from Practice and Progress by L. G. Alexander*

Column A	Column B
1. HAS ANYTHING HAPPENED in your life lately?	A. Of course not, a <i>few days ago</i> I <i>put</i> an ugly stone head over the gate.
2. Really? HAVE YOU ALREADY MOVED in?	B. Yes, I HAVE PUT a 'No parking' sign LATELY, but it HAS HAD no effect SO FAR.
3. How do you like living there?	C. People HAVE BEEN PARKING their cars in front of my gate FOR ALL THIS TIME and I HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE to get my car into the garage even once SINCE I <i>moved</i> in.
4. No kidding! What seems to be the problem?	D. Yes, I HAVE BEEN LIVING there FOR TWO WEEKS.
5. HAVE YOU TRIED to do anything about it YET?	E. It is Medusa, the Gorgon, but unfortunately it HAS NOT TURNED any of those people to stone YET.
6. I hope you HAVE NOT GIVEN UP ALREADY.	F. I HAVE HAD trouble with motorists SINCE I <i>moved</i> in.
7. Oh boy! What is it?	G. I HAVE JUST BOUGHT a house in the city.

## Appendix 10

Role cards for the oral task intended to elicit relatively spontaneous use of the present perfect tenses:

### Task A

#### *Role card 1*

Spotykasz na ulicy kolegę/koleżankę ze szkoły, którego/której nie widziałeś od 4 lat. Przeprowadź z nim/nią rozmowę uwzględniając podane poniżej informacje. Możesz również włączyć do dialogu inne fakty lub zadawać dodatkowe pytania. Oczywiście będziesz również musiał udzielić odpowiedzi na pytania zadawane przez kolegę/koleżankę. Na przeprowadzenie rozmowy macie 10 minut. (Rozpoczynasz)

- wyraż zdziwienie, że go/ją spotykasz,
- powiedz, że cieszysz się, że go/ją spotykasz bo bardzo dawno się nie widzieliście,
- powiedz, że bardzo się zmienił/a (podaj szczegóły),
- zapytaj się co robił/a odkąd się ostatnio spotkaliście i co zmieniło się w jego/jej życiu, zadaj dodatkowe pytania zależnie od udzielanych przez niego informacji,
- powiedz, co zmieniło się w Twoim życiu (np. ożeniłeś się/wyszłaś za mąż, masz dwoje dzieci, od kilku lat pracujesz w szkole, gdzie uczysz angielskiego, ostatnio kupiłeś/łaś samochód i przeprowadziłeś/łaś się do nowego domu, bo Twoje mieszkanie było zbyt małe),
- powiedz, że nie masz czasu z nim/nią się dzisiaj spotkać bo wczoraj Twój syn zachorował i właśnie rozmawiałeś/łaś z lekarzem i kupiłeś/łaś dla niego lekarstwa,
- zaproponuj spotkanie u Ciebie w domu w przyszły czwartek o 16,
- pożegnaj się.

#### *Role card 2*

Spotykasz na ulicy kolegę/koleżankę ze szkoły, którego/której nie widziałeś od 4 lat. Przeprowadź z nim/nią rozmowę uwzględniając podane poniżej informacje. Możesz również włączyć do dialogu inne fakty lub zadawać dodatkowe pytania. Oczywiście będziesz również musiał udzielić odpowiedzi na pytania zadawane przez kolegę/koleżankę. Na przeprowadzenie rozmowy macie 10 minut. (Kolega/koleżanka rozpoczyna)

- powiedz, że nie spodziewałeś się go/jej spotkać w takim miejscu,
- powiedz, że Ty też się cieszysz bo nie widzieliście się od czterech lat, dodaj, że ostatni raz spotkaliście się po egzaminach,

- powiedz, że on/ona w ogóle się nie zmienił/a i wygląda tak samo jak 4 lata temu,
- odpowiedz na pytanie dotyczące tego, co zmieniło się w Twoim życiu (kilka lat temu przeprowadziłeś/łaś się do Londynu i mieszkasz tam od tego czasu, od dwóch lat pracujesz w agencji reklamowej, do tej pory jeszcze się nie ożeniłeś/wyszłaś za mąż, ale masz piękną dziewczynę/chłopaka, ostatnio pojechaliście razem do Grecji),
- zapytaj się co on/ona robił/a odkąd się ostatnio spotkaliście i co zmieniło się w jego/jej życiu, zadaj dodatkowe pytania zależnie od udzielanych przez niego/nią informacji,
- zaproponuj, żebyście poszli do jakiejś kawiarni, żeby trochę porozmawiać,
- powiedz, że zaproponowany termin Ci odpowiada, dodaj, że ostatnio dostałeś list od Roberta, waszego wspólnego przyjaciela i być może on też przyjdzie na to spotkanie,
- pożegnaj się.

## Task B

### Role card 1

Spotykasz na ulicy kolegę/koleżankę ze szkoły, którego/której nie widziałeś od początku wakacji. Przeprowadź z nim/nią rozmowę uwzględniając podane poniżej informacje. Możesz również włączyć do dialogu inne fakty lub zadawać dodatkowe pytania. Oczywiście będziesz również musiał udzielić odpowiedzi na pytania zadawane przez kolegę/koleżankę. Na przeprowadzenie rozmowy macie 10 minut. (Rozpoczynasz)

- powiedz, że jesteś bardzo zadowolony, że go/ją spotykasz,
- powiedz, że musicie się spotkać i porozmawiać, bo nie widzieliście się od czerwca,
- powiedz, że właśnie wróciłeś/łaś z Grecji gdzie byłeś/łaś ze swoją dziewczyną/chłopakiem przez dwa tygodnie, dodaj, że bardzo dobrze się tam bawiliście, powiedz kilka zdań na temat waszego pobytu (jak dostaliście się do Grecji, gdzie mieszkaliście, co robiliście, itp.), dodaj, że nigdy przedtem tak nie odpocząłeś/łaś,
- zapytaj co kolega/koleżanka robił/a przez ostatnie dwa miesiące, zadaj dodatkowe pytania zależnie od udzielanych przez niego/nią informacji,
- powiedz, że pod koniec czerwca pojechałeś/łaś z rodzicami w góry, ale Twoim zdaniem Zakopane jest nudne i już zdecydowaliście, że tam więcej nie pojedziecie,
- powiedz, że od dwóch dni malujesz swój pokój i do tej pory pomalowałeś trzy ściany, dodaj, że musisz skończyć do piątku bo wtedy wracasz do pracy,
- powiedz, że właśnie dzwonił do Ciebie Marek i że chciałby się z Wami spotkać, zaproponuj spotkanie u siebie w domu w przyszłym tygodniu,
- pożegnaj się.

### Role card 2

Spotykasz na ulicy kolegę/koleżankę ze szkoły, którego/której nie widziałeś od początku wakacji. Przeprowadź z nim/nią rozmowę uwzględniając podane poniżej informacje. Możesz również włączyć do dialogu inne fakty lub zadawać dodatkowe pytania. Oczywiście będziesz również musiał udzielić odpowiedzi na pytania zadawane przez kolegę/koleżankę. Na przeprowadzenie rozmowy macie 10 minut. (Kolega/koleżanka rozpoczyna)

- powiedz, że od kilku dni planowałeś do niego/niej zadzwonić,
- powiedz, że też chciałbyś/chciałabyś się z nim/nią spotkać, bo wiele wydarzyło się od Waszego ostatniego spotkania,
- powiedz, że Ty też właśnie wróciłeś znad morza, gdzie spędziłeś z rodziną trzy tygodnie, wyjaśnij, że niezbyt dobrze się bawiliście, bo pogoda była zła, jedzenie straszne, a ludzie okropni (podaj szczegóły), dodaj że nigdy w życiu nie miałeś tak złych wakacji, zapytaj znajomego czy robił jeszcze coś ciekawego,
- powiedz, że się z nim nie zgadzasz, bo Ty też byłeś w górach w lipcu i doskonale się bawiłeś, dodaj, że jeździcie tam od kilku lat i jeszcze nigdy nie byliście rozzarowani, zapytaj co kolega/koleżanka robił/a odkąd wrócił/a z Grecji,
- powiedz, że Ty od kilku dni uczysz się jeździć samochodem i do tej pory miałeś już kilka lekcji, powiedz, że musisz się nauczyć prowadzić samochód, bo ostatnio dostałeś pracę w innym mieście,
- powiedz, że Ty też chcesz się spotkać, a przyszły tydzień będzie najlepszy, powiedz, że nie widziałeś/łaś się z Markiem odkąd wyjechał do Warszawy,
- pożegnaj się.

### Task C

#### Role card 1

Spotykasz na ulicy kolegę/koleżankę ze szkoły, którego/której nie widziałeś przez całe ferie zimowe. Przeprowadź z nim/nią rozmowę uwzględniając podane poniżej informacje. Możesz również włączyć do dialogu inne fakty lub zadawać dodatkowe pytania. Oczywiście będziesz również musiał udzielić odpowiedzi na pytania zadawane przez kolegę/koleżankę. Na przeprowadzenie rozmowy macie 10 minut. (Rozpoczynasz)

- powiedz, że cieszysz się, że go/ją spotykasz,
- powiedz, że właśnie wróciłeś/łaś z Warszawy i że z nikim z klasy się nie widziałeś/łaś od początku ferii, dodaj, że w Warszawie byłeś/łaś przez dziesięć dni, mieszkaleś/łaś u swojej rodziny i bardzo dobrze się tam bawiłeś/łaś, powiedz kilka zdań na temat swojego pobytu (co tam robiłeś/łaś, z kim byłeś/łaś, czy spotkałeś/łaś kogoś interesującego, itp.),

- powiedz, że jeszcze nie zacząłeś/łaś się uczyć, ale masz zamiar to zrobić dzisiaj, zapytaj co Twój kolega/koleżanka robił/a przez ten czas oprócz uczenia się, zadaj dodatkowe pytania zależnie od udzielanych przez niego/nią informacji,
- powiedz, że nie byłeś/łaś w górach od dwóch lat i że masz zamiar tam pojechać w lecie, zapytaj kolegę/koleżankę, czy już zdecydował/a co chce robić podczas wakacji,
- powiedz, że ze sobą nie rozmawiacie odkąd poszliście razem na dyskotekę, dodaj, że czekasz na jej/jego telefon od kilku dni ale jeszcze nie zadzwonił/a,
- powiedz, że kolega/koleżanka chyba ma rację, dodaj, że właśnie dzwonił do Ciebie John i że chciałby żebyście się wieczorem spotkali w jakimś klubie,
- powiedz, że to świetny pomysł, pożegnaj się.

### *Role card 2*

Spotykasz na ulicy kolegę/koleżankę ze szkoły, którego/której nie widziałeś od początku wakacji. Przeprowadź z nim/nią rozmowę uwzględniając podane poniżej informacje. Możesz również włączyć do dialogu inne fakty lub zadawać dodatkowe pytania. Oczywiście będziesz również musiał udzielić odpowiedzi na pytania zadawane przez kolegę/koleżankę. Na przeprowadzenie rozmowy macie 10 minut. (Kolega/koleżanka rozpoczyna)

- powiedz, że Ty też się cieszysz i że do niego ostatnio kilka razy dzwoniłeś/łaś, ale nie było go w domu,
- powiedz, że Ty spotkałeś/łaś się tylko z Robertem bo od tygodnia uczysz się do testu z angielskiego, zapytaj czy on/ona już się do niego przygotował/a,
- powiedz, że właśnie dostałeś prawo jazdy i od kilku dni jeździsz w różne miejsca, dodaj, że w pierwszym tygodniu ferii pojechałeś/łaś ze swoją dziewczyną/chłopakiem do Zakopanego, gdzie byliście przez kilka dni, udziel dodatkowych informacji na temat tego pobytu (jak się tam dostaliście, jaka była pogoda, gdzie mieszkaliście),
- powiedz, że jeszcze o tym nie myślałeś, ale od kilku lat nie byłeś nad morzem i bardzo chciałbyś tam pojechać w lipcu, dodaj, że jeszcze o tym nie rozmawiałeś/łaś ze swoją dziewczyną/chłopakiem i wszystko może się zmienić, zapytaj czy kolega/koleżanka widział/a się ostatnio ze swoją dziewczyną/chłopakiem,
- powiedz, że może powinien/powinna zadzwonić pierwszy/a, dodaj że ostatnio spotkałeś ją/go ona ulicy i był/a bardzo smutny/a,
- powiedz, że Ty też to planujesz od dawna, bo nigdzie nie byliście od Bożego Narodzenia, zaproponuj, żebyście spotkali się o ósmej,
- pożegnaj się.

## Appendix 11

Tests intended to elicit planned use of the present perfect tenses:

### Test A

Czasowniki podane w nawiasach wstaw w odpowiedniej formie:

1. We are not ready yet. My sister (already, eat) \_\_\_\_\_ dinner, but she (not, do) \_\_\_\_\_ her homework yet.
2. Tom (come) \_\_\_\_\_ to Paris six years ago and he (live) \_\_\_\_\_ here since that time.
3. I know it is difficult to believe but my parents (know) \_\_\_\_\_ my English teacher since they (take) \_\_\_\_\_ part in the same swimming contest two years ago.
4. Frank is very tired because he (work) \_\_\_\_\_ in the garden all day. He (just, get) \_\_\_\_\_ back home.
5. Last Monday I was so tired that I (fall) \_\_\_\_\_ asleep at 8 o'clock. (you, ever, go) \_\_\_\_\_ to bed so early in your life?
6. Look at the time! It's almost seven o'clock and I (write) \_\_\_\_\_ only seven letters so far. I (never, be) \_\_\_\_\_ so slow in my life.
7. Look at Tim! He is crying because our neighbor's dog (bite) \_\_\_\_\_ him. In fact it (attack) \_\_\_\_\_ a few people lately and we have to do something about it.
8. How long (you, have) \_\_\_\_\_ that beautiful dress? I (not, see) \_\_\_\_\_ it before.
9. This is the most funny joke I (ever, hear) \_\_\_\_\_. Robert says that everybody laughed when he (tell) \_\_\_\_\_ it in school a few days ago.
10. We (visit) \_\_\_\_\_ Africa ten years ago and we (stay) \_\_\_\_\_ there for a few weeks.

Zdecyduj, czy następujące zdania są poprawne. Jeśli, Twoim zdaniem zdanie jest poprawne, postaw przy nim literę C, jeśli nie to literę W. Popraw zdania, które zawierają według Ciebie błędy:

1. How long have he been living in this house? \_\_\_\_\_
2. I have spoken to Robert a few minutes ago. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Frank has won a lot of prizes since he started playing chess. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Last year Mark invited me to London and I was there for two weeks. \_\_\_\_\_
5. John and Mary are married for ten years now. \_\_\_\_\_

6. She has never taught such a little child before. \_\_\_\_\_
7. He is looking for a good job since he finished school. \_\_\_\_\_
8. When has she met your sister for the first time? \_\_\_\_\_

Uzupełnij luki w poniższych zdaniach:

1. The day before yesterday Jake \_\_\_\_\_ some money on the street.
2. Henry \_\_\_\_\_ ill for a week now and he is still staying in bed.
3. How much money \_\_\_\_\_ when she was in New York?
4. You \_\_\_\_\_ four cups of coffee since the morning. You really drink too much of it.
5. Just look at Kate! Her clothes are so dirty because she \_\_\_\_\_ the walls in her room.
6. I am sorry Ted but you will have to wait. I \_\_\_\_\_ your computer yet.
7. This is the most interesting book I \_\_\_\_\_. You must read it too.
8. Julia Roberts \_\_\_\_\_ a lot of films and she is going to make many more.

## Test B

Czasowniki podane w nawiasach wstaw w odpowiedniej formie:

1. I am sorry, but I can't visit you today. My mother (not, come) \_\_\_\_\_ back from work yet and my father (just, tell) \_\_\_\_\_ me that I must look after my brother.
2. Last week my sister (break) \_\_\_\_\_ her leg and she (stay) \_\_\_\_\_ in bed since then.
3. A lot of people refuse to believe it but they (have) \_\_\_\_\_ this dog since somebody (steal) \_\_\_\_\_ their car ten years ago.
4. My son is all wet because he (play) \_\_\_\_\_ in the lake all day. I am quite sure he (already, forget) \_\_\_\_\_ about that broken toy.
5. (you, ever, sleep) \_\_\_\_\_ for twelve hours in your life? Two days ago Jimmy (get) \_\_\_\_\_ up at two o'clock in the afternoon.
6. Oh, my God. It's almost four and I (do) \_\_\_\_\_ only three exercises so far. I (never, spend) \_\_\_\_\_ so much time on an English homework in my life.
7. Look at that man! He is very angry because his son (take) \_\_\_\_\_ his car without his permission. I'm sorry for him because it (happen) \_\_\_\_\_ a few times lately.
8. How long (you, know) \_\_\_\_\_ Betty's parents? I come here every day and I (not, meet) \_\_\_\_\_ them before.
9. This is the most stupid film I (ever, see) \_\_\_\_\_. I went to the cinema a few days ago but I (leave) \_\_\_\_\_ after about thirty minutes.
10. Frank (go) \_\_\_\_\_ to China a few years ago and he (travel) \_\_\_\_\_ around the country for a month.



Zdecyduj, czy następujące zdania są poprawne. Jeśli, Twoim zdaniem zdanie jest poprawne, postaw przy nim literę C, jeśli nie to literę W. Popraw zdania, które zawierają według Ciebie błędy:

1. How long has they been watching that film? \_\_\_\_\_
2. Nancy has flown to London last December. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Henry has grown a beard since you talked to him at the wedding. \_\_\_\_\_
4. Five years ago Frank had an accident and he stayed in hospital for a month. \_\_\_\_\_
5. They have never thought about getting married before. \_\_\_\_\_
6. Mark is my best friend for at least ten years. \_\_\_\_\_
7. Ted and Mary are working for the same company since they met.. \_\_\_\_\_
8. What time has he woken up after that party? \_\_\_\_\_

Uzupełnij luki w poniższych zdaniach:

1. Three days ago my sister \_\_\_\_\_ her silver chain at school and she can't find it.
2. My wife \_\_\_\_\_ busy for over a week and she doesn't have the time to talk to me.
3. What interesting places \_\_\_\_\_ when you were in Washington?
4. They \_\_\_\_\_ at least a kilogram of sweets since breakfast. They have to stop.
5. Just look at Frank! His clothes are so dirty because he (repair) \_\_\_\_\_ our car.
6. You will borrow money from somebody else because I \_\_\_\_\_ my salary yet.
7. This is the least intelligent person I \_\_\_\_\_. Don't invite her to the party.
8. Eric Clapton \_\_\_\_\_ many songs and he is going to sing many more.

### Test C

Czasowniki podane w nawiasach wstaw w odpowiedniej formie:

1. I am really very happy today. I (already, write) \_\_\_\_\_ my history essay and I (just, find) \_\_\_\_\_ out that my father will lend me his car next weekend.
2. Two hours ago Jack (lose) \_\_\_\_\_ his wallet and he (look) \_\_\_\_\_ for it since then.

3. It may sound strange but they (see) \_\_\_\_\_ each other only a few times since the time they (send) \_\_\_\_\_ each other Valentine cards three weeks ago.
4. Jackie is depressed because she (wait) \_\_\_\_\_ for her boyfriend to call her all day. It is her birthday and he (not, bring) \_\_\_\_\_ her flowers yet.
5. Last Wednesday I (feel) \_\_\_\_\_ terrible and that's why I had to go to bed early. (you, ever, have) \_\_\_\_\_ a headache for three hours?
6. That's incredible. It's Friday and he (read) \_\_\_\_\_ only twenty pages so far. He (never, go) \_\_\_\_\_ to school unprepared but it will be different this time.
7. Just take a look at Nancy! She is in a bad mood because her boyfriend (grow) \_\_\_\_\_ a moustache. Well, he (decide) \_\_\_\_\_ to do a few strange things lately.
8. How long (you, be) \_\_\_\_\_ in the same class as Robert. Over two years, but he (not, do) \_\_\_\_\_ anything so awful before.
9. Tim is the most conceited person I (ever, speak) \_\_\_\_\_ to. When Patty asked him for help last Saturday he (say) \_\_\_\_\_ she is stupid.
10. Daniel (meet) \_\_\_\_\_ an old school friend on the street a few weeks ago and they (talk) \_\_\_\_\_ with each other for two hours.

Zdecyduj, czy następujące zdania są poprawne, czy też nie. Jeśli, Twoim zdaniem zdanie jest poprawne, postaw przy nim literę C, jeśli nie to literę W. Popraw zdania, które zawierają według Ciebie błędy:

1. How long have he been acting like that? \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_ My parents have made a lot of money last Monday. \_\_\_\_\_
3. Donald has fallen ill many times since he left the hospital in May. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_ Hillary went to France in 1998 and she had to stay there for three months. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_ Where have you kissed each other for the first time? \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_ The weather is terrible for the last few days. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_ Greg and Sally are riding a bicycle since the morning. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_ My brother has never beaten anybody before. \_\_\_\_\_

Uzupełnij luki w poniższych zdaniach:

1. Some time ago my best friend \_\_\_\_\_ her leg and she can't walk now.
2. Jack \_\_\_\_\_ in London for a few days, but he is coming back tomorrow.
3. What famous actors \_\_\_\_\_ when you went on that trip to Hollywood?

4. He \_\_\_\_\_ about thirty photographs since breakfast. Who will pay for it?
5. Look at her! Her skin is so red because she \_\_\_\_\_ on the beach all day.
6. You will have to be very patient. They \_\_\_\_\_ your car yet.
7. This is the most stupid joke I \_\_\_\_\_. It is not funny at all.
8. Adam Małysz \_\_\_\_\_ a lot of competitions and I hope he will win many more.



## Streszczenie

Miejsce jakie powinno zajmować nauczanie formalnych aspektów języka (ang. *form-focused instruction*) albo po prostu uczenie gramatyki w dydaktyce języków obcych było zawsze kwestią niezwykle kontrowersyjną i pomimo istotnych postępów w dziedzinie badań nad procesem przyswajania języka drugiego (ang. *second language acquisition*) pozostaje taką na początku dwudziestego pierwszego wieku. Mimo, iż większość teoretyków i badaczy jest zgodnych, że zwracanie uwagi uczących się na struktury gramatyczne ułatwia przyswajanie języka i w niektórych sytuacjach może być koniecznością, sporo szczegółowych kwestii nadal pozostaje nierozstrzygniętych. Przeglądając najnowszą literaturę przedmiotu nadal trudno znaleźć jednoznaczne rekomendacje co do tego, które techniki są najbardziej efektywne, kiedy należy uczyć gramatyki, jak długo powinna trwać interwencja i jak powinna być intensywna. Nie ma również zgody co do tego, w jaki sposób powinny być przeprowadzane lekcje poświęcone wprowadzaniu i utrwalaniu form języka, jaka powinna być rola gramatyki w programie nauczania oraz na których strukturach nauczyciele powinni się koncentrować. Niniejsza książka jest głosem we wciąż aktualnej debacie nad rolą nauczania formalnych aspektów języka i stanowi próbę udzielenia odpowiedzi na tego typu pytania biorąc pod uwagę dystynktywne cechy polskiego kontekstu edukacyjnego. Istotnym jej elementem jest opis dwóch projektów badawczych, które miały na celu zbadanie wpływu kombinacji różnych technik i procedur na przyswajanie stosunkowo trudnych dla uczniów struktur gramatycznych i których wyniki były ważnym punktem odniesienia dla zaproponowania modelu nauczania form językowych w polskich szkołach.

Książka składa się z pięciu rozdziałów, z których pierwsze cztery stanowią podbudowę teoretyczną, a ostatni poświęcony jest prezentacji i analizie wyników przeprowadzonych przez autora badań. Rozdział pierwszy ma za zadanie wprowadzić czytelnika do omawianej problematyki i koncentruje się na wyjaśnieniu istotnych kwestii terminologicznych. Autor definiuje tutaj tak ważne dla dalszych rozważań pojęcia jak *nauczanie formalnych aspektów języka* oraz *forma językowa* i przedstawia poglądy na naturę i znajomość gramatyki. Omawia także krótko ciągle zmieniające się poglądy na rolę gramatyki w dydaktyce języków obcych, uzasadnia potrzebę prowadzenia badań nad efektywnością nauczania form językowych oraz prezentuje zasadnicze kwestie związane z metodologią tego typu badań.

W rozdziale drugim przedstawiona zostaje geneza tzw. podejść nieinterwencyjnych (ang. *non-interventionist approaches*), które postulują upodobnienie dyskursu w klasie szkolnej do sytuacji gdzie język jest przyswajany w warunkach naturalnych i odrzucają konieczność nauczania elementów kodu językowego na rzecz stworzenia możliwości autentycznej komunikacji. Znaleźć tutaj można omówienie wyników badań, które pokazują, że tak jak ma to miejsce w przypadku języka ojczystego, przyswajanie morfologii i składni języka drugiego warunkowane jest istnieniem sekwencji rozwojowych w dużej mierze opornych na formalne nauczanie. Druga część rozdziału z kolei poświęcona jest prezentacji i ewaluacji teorii i hipotez, które postulują odrzucenie nauczania gramatyki oraz przykłady praktycznych implementacji tego typu poglądów.

Zasadniczym celem rozdziału trzeciego jest przedstawienie szeregu ważkich argumentów dydaktycznych, empirycznych i teoretycznych przemawiających za nauczaniem form języka. Autor omawia niebezpieczeństwa związane z promowaniem porozumiewania się kosztem poprawności gramatycznej, przedstawia wyniki badań empirycznych, które jasno pokazują, że interwencja nauczyciela może skutkować bardziej poprawnym użyciem form językowych oraz omawia modele teoretyczne, które uznają nauczanie gramatyki za nieodzowny element procesu dydaktycznego. W końcowej części rozdziału zaprezentowana zostaje całościowa teoria nauczania formalnych aspektów języka, która uwzględnia najnowsze propozycje teoretyczne i wyniki badań, jak również realia polskiego kontekstu edukacyjnego.

Rozdział czwarty koncentruje się na sposobach nauczania gramatyki, zarówno na poziomie poszczególnych technik i procedur, jak również organizacji lekcji, roli gramatyki w programie nauczania, wyborze struktur, na których skupiać się powinna interwencja oraz sposobach oceny znajomości form językowych. Co istotne, wartość omawianych rozwiązań zostaje poddana ocenie w odniesieniu do wyników najnowszych badań empirycznych oraz ograniczeń kształcenia językowego w polskich szkołach.

Ostatni rozdział pracy poświęcony jest opisowi dwóch projektów badawczych przeprowadzonych pośród uczniów klasy drugiej i trzeciej liceum ogólnokształcącego, które miały na celu określenie krótko- i długotrwałego wpływu różnych procedur nauczania na opanowanie trzech aspektów gramatyki angielskiej – czasu przeszłego prostego, strony biernej oraz czasu "present perfect", tak pod względem znajomości reguł jak i umiejętności ich spontanicznego wykorzystania. Wyniki badań dowodzą, że nauczanie form języka przynosi wymierne i trwałe efekty, przy czym jego efektywność jest uzależniona od specyficznych cech danej struktury, stopnia jej opanowania przez uczących się oraz rodzaju wiedzy językowej jaką chcemy rozwijać.

Zarówno wyniki tych dwóch eksperymentów jak i rozważania we wcześniejszych rozdziałach stanowią punkt wyjścia do przedstawienia szeregu propozycji dotyczących bardziej efektywnego nauczania form języka (gramatyki) w polskich szkołach, jak również wskazówek dla dalszych badań w tym zakresie. I tak, w opinii autora, nauczanie gramatyki jest niezbędne ze względu na bardzo ograniczone możliwości kontaktu z językiem. Powinno ono jednak być uzupełnione istotnym elementem komunikacyjnym, ponieważ tylko wtedy uczący się będą mieli możliwość nie tylko świadomego opanowania i stosowania reguł, ale także ich wykorzystania w autentycznej komunikacji. Autor jest również zdania, że nauczanie form języka skupiać się musi w równej mierze na formie, znaczeniu i użyciu danej struktury, a jego efektem ma być nie tylko poprawne stosowanie poznanych prawideł, ale również pamięciowe opanowanie szeregu jednostek leksykalnych, co jest warunkiem skutecznego osiągania celów komunikacyjnych w sytuacjach życia codziennego.

Jeśli chodzi o miejsce gramatyki w programie nauczania, autor postuluje, aby w początkowych stadiach proces dydaktyczny oparty był na preselekcji form językowych. Z upływem czasu natomiast, punkt ciężkości może być stopniowo przesuwany na element komunikacyjny, przy czym w przypadku zaawansowanych uczniów nie jest wykluczone stosowanie programów opartych w całości o autentyczne aktywności i zadania. Lekcje poświęcone gramatyce mogą być w bardzo różny sposób planowane, z tym, że w przypadku uczniów początkujących i średniozaawansowanych zasadne wydaje się stosowanie tzw. procedury PPP (ang. *presentation-practice-production*) polegającej na wprowadzeniu danej reguły i jej ćwiczeniu najpierw pod ścisłą kontrolą nauczyciela a później w zadaniach wymagających bardziej spontanicznego użycia języka. Ważne jest tutaj to, aby nie zaniedbywać elementu komunikacji oraz postrzegać nauczanie gramatyki w perspektywie kilku lekcji, gdyż tylko w ten sposób możemy zapewnić uczącym się odpowiednią ekspozycję oraz umożliwić im stosowanie danej struktury w różnych, w miarę naturalnych sytuacjach.

W odniesieniu do konkretnych sposobów nauczania, autor widzi miejsce zarówno dla dedukcji jak i indukcji, tradycyjnych ćwiczeń językowych jak i bardziej innowacyjnych technik i procedur oraz zwraca uwagę na pozytywną rolę jaką może odegrać poprawianie błędów językowych w trakcie wykonywania zadań komunikacyjnych. Decyzje nauczyciela w tym zakresie muszą jednak być dokładnie przemyślane, brać pod uwagę rodzaj struktury, indywidualne cechy uczących się, jak również lokalne uwarunkowania. Podkreślona zostaje także konieczność testowania nie tylko umiejętności zastosowania poznanych reguł w ćwiczeniach, ale także ich użycia w komunikacji oraz rola rozwijania autonomii ucznia w przyswajaniu gramatyki.

Na zakończenie autor zwraca uwagę na potrzebę prowadzenia badań nad sposobami nauczania form języka w polskim kontekście edu-

cyjnym, które mogłyby generować konkretne, osadzone w naszych realiach propozycje, oceniane przez nauczycieli podczas prowadzonych przez nich lekcji. Konieczne jest także propagowanie nowych rozwiązań dydaktycznych pośród przyszłych i obecnych nauczycieli, bo tylko poprzez ich wprowadzanie i weryfikację możliwe jest poznanie ich prawdziwej wartości, a w dłuższej perspektywie podniesienie jakości nauczania formalnych aspektów języka w polskich szkołach.

## O Autorze

Dr Mirosław Pawlak ukończył Uniwersytet im. Adama Mickiewicza w Poznaniu w roku 1995 i tam też uzyskał stopień naukowy doktora w roku 1999. Jego rozprawa doktorska, napisana pod kierunkiem profesor Krystyny Drożdżiał-Szelest dotyczyła procesów interakcyjnych w klasie szkolnej oraz ich wpływu na proces przyswajania języka obcego.

W latach 1993-2003 autor był nauczycielem języka angielskiego w Liceum Ogólnokształcącym im. Tadeusza Kościuszki w Turku. Po otrzymaniu stopnia doktora rozpoczął pracę w Zakładzie Filologii Angielskiego Wydziału Pedagogiczno-Artystycznego UAM w Kaliszu oraz w Instytucie Neofilologii Państwowej Wyższej Szkoły Zawodowej w Koninie gdzie jest zatrudniony po dzień dzisiejszy.

Dr Pawlak wygłosił 25 referatów konferencyjnych, wydał książkę i był redaktorem kolejnej oraz opublikował 36 artykułów w Polsce i za granicą. Od roku 2004 jest członkiem zespołu powołanego przez Centralny Ośrodek Doskonalenia Nauczycieli w Warszawie odpowiedzialnego za wdrożenie w naszym kraju *Europejskiego portfolio językowego*, projektu Rady Europy. Koordynuje pracami grupy roboczej przygotowującej wersję dokumentu dla uczniów szkół ponadgimnazjalnych i studentów i jest jej współautorem.